The Middlebury Campus

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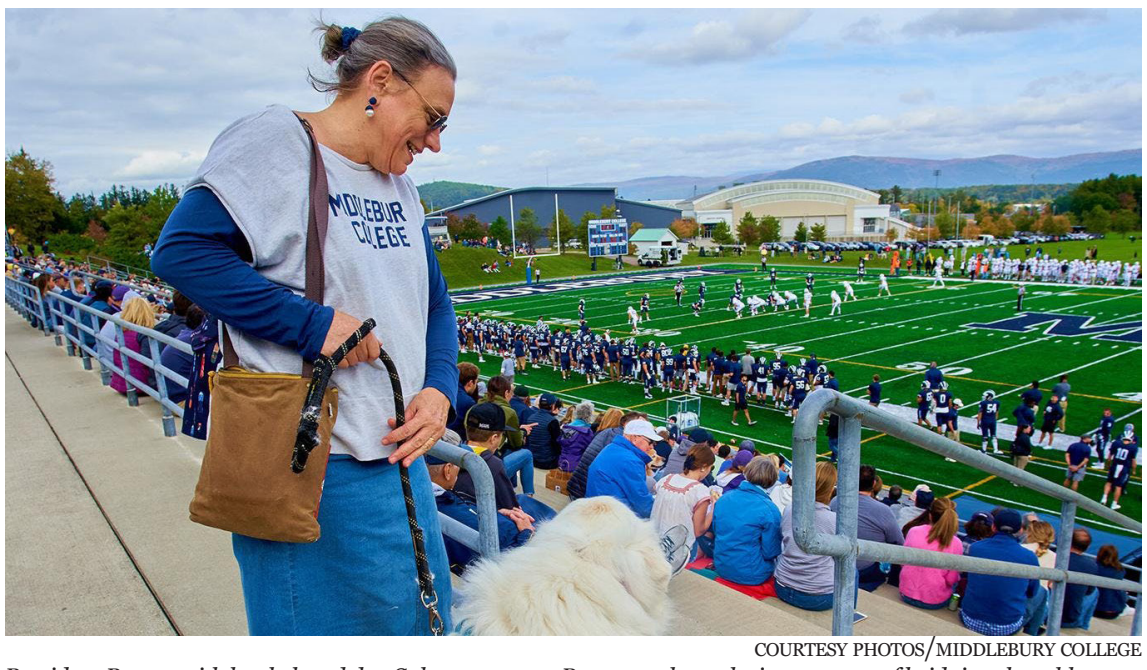
AN EXIT INTERVIEW WITH LAURIE PATTON

Laurie Patton speaking to a community member after the announcement of her presidency on Nov. 18, 2014



COURTESY PHOTOS/MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE

President Patton with her beloved dog Suka at a game. Patton spoke to the importance of bridging the athlete versus non-athlete divides at Middlebury in her interview with The Campus.

By RYAN McELROY, COLE CHAUDHARI & MADELEINE KAPTEIN
Editor in Chief & Managing Editors

With an eye on the horizon after announcing her departure last May, Middlebury College President Laurie Patton has since led her final Commencement ceremony, conducted her final Board of Trustees meeting in October, and, now, sat for her final interview with The Campus.

The days of seeing her strolling outside Old Chapel with her dog Suka are numbered, and spotting her at Nocturne is now a fond memory rather than a distinct possibility; starting next month Patton's emails (and occasional poem) will no longer land in our

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Uncertainty rises in higher education following the U.S. election

By ROSELLA GRAHAM & HUGO ZHANG
News Editor & Contributing Writer

A month has passed since former President Donald Trump won the presidential election and the Middlebury community began discussions surrounding the implications of his return to office. Trump's victory has sparked concerns among college faculty about the future of higher education, with specific focus on environmental studies, the study of race and gender, and politics and international affairs.

One of the key issues in academia surrounding the Trump presidency has been his rhetoric on banning the discussion of race and gender in K-12 schools. Professor of Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies Laurie Essig warned that while a nationwide gender studies ban is uncertain, some institutions are already preparing to resist the Trump administration's broad attacks on gender and race theory in the education field as a whole.

"When political regimes get into place that ban books and

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INDIGENOUS STUDENTS REFLECT ON STRUGGLE FOR VISIBILITY

By CAROLINE JIAO
News Editor

The month of November is National American Indian Heritage Month, which was designed in 1990 to commemorate the nation's indigenous heritage. At Middlebury, students who celebrated the indigenous community last month have said that their visibility on campus and their ability to maintain an organized community remains an ongoing struggle.

A group of students first founded the Voices of Indigenous People (VIP) club in 2006, but there has been a sharp decrease in the number of enrolled Native American students since the 2010–2011 academic year. From 2008 to 2023, VIP was inactive, but in 2023, Nadia Hare '25 had the idea to revive the club. In an interview with The Campus, Hare described recognizing the importance of creating a casual space to connect with those from similar backgrounds.

"Initially I really just wanted a super chill space, to get together with some friends and just hang out. That was my vibe and that was the only capacity I had," Hare said.

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COLLEGE TO CONDUCT FIRST SHELTER-IN-PLACE DRILL THIS WEEK

By RYAN McELROY
Editor in Chief

Middlebury has planned its first-ever shelter-in-place drill for this Friday, Dec. 6 at 1:50 pm. Lasting 15 minutes, the exercise is meant to prepare community members for a variety of emergency situations on campus, including active shooter threats, hazardous waste spills, dangerous weather conditions and other crises.

Associate Vice President of Safety Demitria Kirby announced the drill in an email to the college community on Nov. 12, followed by another update on Nov. 21. Kirby shared that the college has been preparing for the drill for months, and she is hoping to provide full transparency with community members about why such an activity is necessary.

"We started to discuss the plans for the upcoming drill early last year. We've had conversations with senior leadership, Faculty Council, Staff Council and students about what the shelter-in-place drill would look like," Kirby told The Campus in an interview this week.

The drill will begin on Friday afternoon with a message from MiddAlert to seek shelter in the nearest building away from windows. Approximately 20 staff members will be around campus in high-visibility vests to direct students into buildings and to observe community responses to inform future preparations.

"The goal is simply to practice sheltering in place and encourage productive discussions on emergency preparedness and response throughout our community," Kirby wrote in her initial email last month.

The drill will take place in the wake of recent security incidents at Middlebury, including a hoax active shooter situation in Davis Family Library on April 9, 2023. Some students at the time, especially international students, reported being unfamiliar with emergency protocols, according to Pete Brown, Middlebury's emergency management coordinator. After the incident, the college faced questions concerning the timing of the MiddAlert system, which took almost an hour and a half to notify students of the potential threat. The system was

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STUDENTS WHO SERVE:
HOW MIDDLEBURY ROTC NURTURES FUTURE ARMY OFFICERS

COURTESY PHOTO /MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE

Middlebury ROTC, which has eight members, holds workouts and class time to prepare students for the Army.

By LUKE POWER
Contributing Writer

Ever been walking to class on a Wednesday morning and wondered who those students in Army fatigues on campus are? They are Middlebury's very own cadets — and likely part of the next generation of Army officers.

Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) is a program that offers college students at over 1,700 colleges and universities military training and a future commission as officers in the three largest branches of the military. Middlebury offers the Army-specific branch in partnership with the University of Vermont (UVM) ROTC, and the program currently has eight students at the college.

One member of Middlebury ROTC, Jacqueline Cook '28, explained her decision to join the program as a natural fusion between her academic and professional aspirations.

"I have always wanted to join the Army but I have also wanted to have a full private college experience," Cook wrote in an email to The Campus. "I fell in love with Midd on multiple campus visits and was delighted when I realized I could do ROTC at Midd and have my cake and eat it too."

Jay Wendell '26.5, another cadet in the Middlebury ROTC program, shared that while he had not seriously considered

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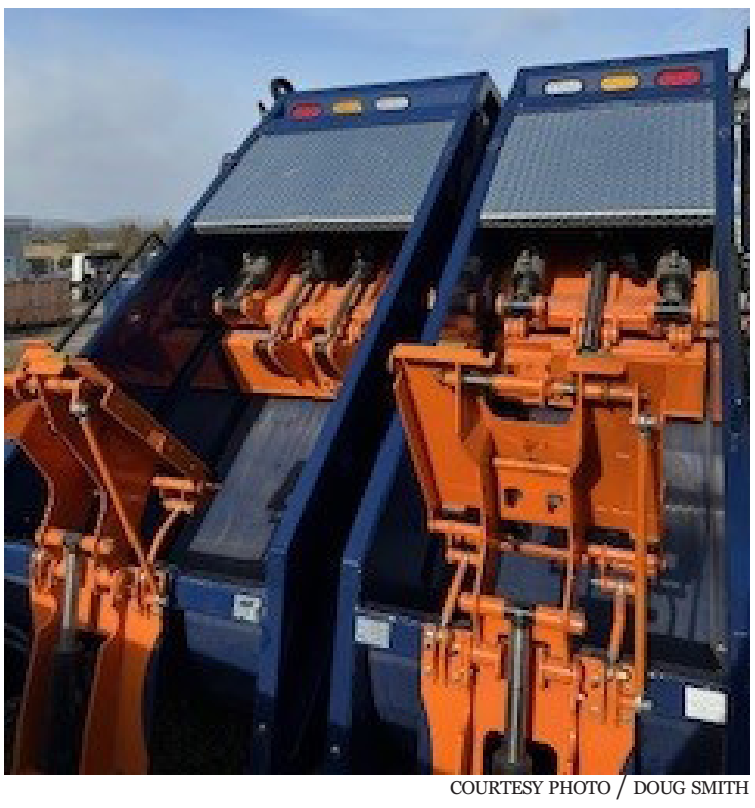
TALKING TRASH: WHERE DOES MIDDLEBURY'S WASTE GO?

By MAGGIE BRYAN & LILY MCGOVERN
Senior News Editor & Contributing Writer



COURTESY PHOTO / DOUG SMITH

The new garbage trucks will enable Facilities Services to pick up trash and recycling in one stop without touching it again.

This semester, Talking Trash has detailed Middlebury's food waste and recycling processes. This time, we're investigating what happens to the waste that is not recycled or composted: landfill trash.

In 2023, Middlebury sent 943,520 pounds of waste to the landfill, which accounted for 40% of the college's total waste, according to Kim Bickham, supervisor for waste management and custodian. Bickham said the college has robust systems in place to divert trash from landfills so that even less of Middlebury's total waste is thrown away. Improper sorting of waste, however, risks sending compostable or recyclable waste to the trash, ultimately overburdens landfills.

Garbage trucks travel across campus about 10 times a month to collect waste bags from the trash and recycling bins on campus and bring them to the Recycling Center. At the Recycling Center, facilities and custodial staff perform cursory checks of each bag to look for 'co-mingled' bags, those that appear to include both trash and recycling, which Bickham said must be thrown out as trash. Middlebury's Recycling Center no longer sorts recycling and trash, placing the responsibility of sorting on the disposers themselves — namely students, faculty and staff.

A common occurrence, according to Doug Smith, facilities team liaison for waste management, is someone throwing a container with liquid into the recycling, which then contaminates the entire bag and requires it to be sent to the landfill.

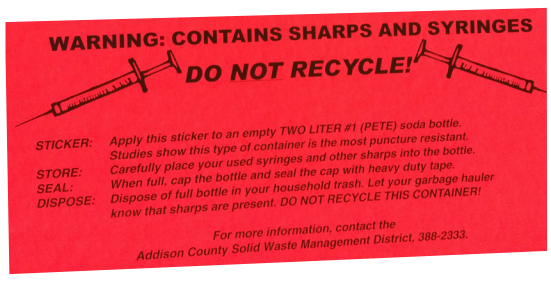
The list of materials that constitute true trash in Vermont is short. According to Middlebury's Recycling and Waste Management website, trash includes food wrappers, tissues, paper cups, paper plates, label sheets, carbon paper, aluminum lined paper, styrofoam, empty motor oil containers, paper towels, hygiene products and plastic grocery bags. Most other waste belongs in recycling or compost bins.

"Really, the majority of the trash that we get are paper towels, Kleenexes, like bathroom trash," Bickham said. "That's really it — that's all we really should be producing."

Bickham described the decision-making process of sending a bag to the landfill or recycling and how the process has been complicated since the pandemic.

"The deciding factor is how many paper towels and Kleenex are in something," Bickham said. "Even if it is in a clean bag of recycling, we have to throw that away, because after Covid it was stated that we would not open any bags that contain paper towels and Kleenex."

Improperly sorted waste can be problematic in a few ways. First, Middlebury is fined by the Addison County Transfer station if employees there find toxic waste — such as biohazard containers, fluorescent light bulbs or paint — in its trash. If hazardous waste ends up in the landfill, toxic chemicals and fumes can leach into nearby air and water. Fines can also be imposed when large amounts of contaminated recycling are delivered as recycling to the transfer station. Middlebury is not fined when compost ends up in the landfill, but Bickham explained the justification to keep compost and hazardous waste out of landfills.


WARNING: CONTAINS SHARPS AND SYRINGES
DO NOT RECYCLE!
STICKER: Apply this sticker to an empty TWO LITER #1 (PETE) soda bottle. Studies show this type of container is the most puncture resistant.
STORE: Carefully place your used syringes and other sharps into the bottle.
SEAL: When full, cap the bottle and seal the cap with heavy duty tape.
DISPOSE: Dispose of full bottle in your household trash. Let your garbage hauler know that sharps are present. DO NOT RECYCLE THIS CONTAINER!
For more information, contact the Addison County Solid Waste Management District, 388-2333.

"An important reason for keeping compost out of the trash is the gasses that it kicks off," she said. "Important reasons for keeping the batteries and the light bulbs and that stuff out is because you're putting toxins into the landfill, and that leaches into the soil."

Once trash reaches Addison County Transfer Station on Vermont Route 7, trucks carry the trash to the state's only landfill in Coventry, Vt. The 130-acre Coventry Landfill is owned by Casella Waste Systems, which operates nine landfills across the Northeast. Casella added 50 acres to the landfill in 2021, and it plans to build three more cells of similar sizes over the next 20 years, but Vermont has no further plans for its waste after that.

Vermont's efforts to reduce waste include The Materials Management Plan, which is published every five years, and the Universal Food Scraps Recycling Law of 2020. These initiatives have shown mixed results — the waste diverted increased slightly after 2020, but the landfill waste load has increased over the past decade.

On the bright side, Facilities Services continues to search for ways to divert trash from the landfill despite staffing shortages. The Recycling Center will begin using a newly-acquired split-back truck in February, which Bickham hopes will increase efficiency for waste management. The truck will have two sides, one for trash and one for recycling, as opposed to the current truck which has one area for all collected bags. The truck will eventually eliminate the need to use bags for recycling — instead, items will be taken straight from bins and dumped into the truck.

In any case, the importance of separating waste from the very beginning of the process is clear, but ensuring proper separation relies on education on how to properly dispose of waste, according to Bickham. Facilities Services will conduct a training on these practices with staff in the Human Resources Office in December.

With facilities having launched its own efforts to train the community on proper waste disposal, Smith and Bickham hope that students, staff and faculty will take their own steps to become

Uncertainty rises in higher education following election

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make ideas dangerous, we should all be worried, not just those of us in Gender Studies," Essig wrote in an email to The Campus. "This is an authoritarian turn since it means outlawing certain forms of knowledge, thinking, and speaking."

Although Middlebury can be influenced by changes in the national political environment, Professor of Political Science and Director of the Kathryn Wasserman Davis Collaborative in Conflict Transformation Sarah Stroup said she believes the college is unlikely to experience dramatic changes to the curriculum under the new administration.

"We're a private institution and in a blue state. Our governor Phil Scott is a Republican but not a Trump or MAGA fan, so we're kind of isolated from these," Stroup wrote in an email to The Campus.

Stroup also shared that Trump's return to the White House might affect her research field — humanitarian relief and human rights international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) — based on policies during his previous term.

"In his prior term, we saw substantial reductions in support for UN aid agencies and the return of the 'global gag rule' (limiting aid to groups that provide reproductive access)," Stroup wrote, adding that aid for Palestinians from the United Nations will likely be a major target at the United Nations.

Among his other comments on higher education and international issues, Trump has repeatedly threatened to dissolve the U.S. Department of Education (DOE), claiming that the department is responsible for "indoctrinating young people with inappropriate racial, sexual, and political material."

Associate Professor of Education Studies Jonathan Miller-Lane acknowledged that while outright eliminating the department is unfeasible and unlikely, he believes the loss of jobs there will impact people's lives and careers.

"If you were to eliminate these jobs in the DOE you would lose important data collection and oversight regarding whether schools are complying with federal anti-discrimination laws," Miller-Lane wrote in an email to The Campus. "I think everyone in any field, after any election, attends to how that election might shape their future."

Miller-Lane also explained how his field of education is particularly liable to scrutiny from politicians.

"If we understand that education involves the 'transmission of culture' and not only 'reading, writing and arithmetic' we can understand why education can become such a volatile issue," Miller-Lane wrote, citing historian Bernard Bailyn. "Schools are often battlegrounds where we argue about who we think we are as a community and a nation."

Stroup also shared a broad concern about the current higher education system in the national discourse.

"It's like a political football. Higher education has become politicized, to the dismay of many of us in the field," Stroup wrote in an email to The Campus.

In addition to his plans to reform the American education system, Trump has called for reversing most restrictions on carbon emissions and repealing the Inflation Reduction Act passed under the Biden administration in 2022.

Chris Klyza, professor of Political Science and Environmental Studies emphasized that despite mounting threats to climate policy, constitutional checks and balances still provide safeguards.

"We've seen this movie before, so we'll see what he tries to do. The biggest changes, I think, are going to be limited just by what's going on in Congress," Klyza said, referring to the future Trump administration. He believes that while significant budget cuts to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Department of the Interior may occur, fundamental changes to law are unlikely.

"Best case scenario from an environmental perspective, is they're not going to be able to accomplish much, but there's going to be nothing positive happening for four years," Klyza said. "Climate change is an issue where every day that we're not moving forward, things get worse."

Across disciplines, the next four years will be crucial in shaping the course of different academic disciplines in light of the shifting political climate. Miller-Lane said he hopes that despite the varying opinions held by students and faculty across campus, Middlebury will continue to offer a welcoming space for rich conversations.

"If we so choose, schools can be places where we collaborate, rather than battle, for the purpose of embodying the principles of a diverse, inclusive, democratic republic and fostering learning environments in which all students can thrive," Miller-Lane wrote. "The choice is always ours."

PHOTO OF THE WEEK: SUNSET OVER PEARSONS HALL

As the fall semester comes to a close and the days grow shorter in the approach to the new year, sunlight is a hot commodity. Managing Editor Cole Chaudhari '26 captured the sunset in its full late-afternoon splendor last week, highlighting the silhouette of Pearsons Hall and the tail end of Milliken Hall. Daylight will continue to slip away until Dec. 21, the winter solstice and the shortest day of the year.

THE EXIT INTERVIEW: LAURIE PATTON REFLECTS ON LEGACY AND LEADERSHIP

COURTESY PHOTO / MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE

Patton was president of the college for almost ten years. She originally planned to stay on until 2028, but will depart in January 2025.

COURTESY PHOTO / MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE

Patton led the college's response to Covid-19 during her tenure as president. Here she is with administrator Hannah Ross handing out free masks.

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Outlook inboxes.

Amidst her preparations to depart the college and begin her new role as president of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Patton met with us in November to reflect on her tenure at Middlebury and what faces the next president of the college.

Patton has worked on several large projects in her time at Middlebury, from Energy2028 — an initiative to transition the college to using 100% renewable energy sources by 2028 — to efforts in the Conflict Transformation Collaborative.

Patton emphasized how important it will be for the next president to jump right into managing and garnering funding for these projects while continuing to work on reaching a 5% spend rate for the college endowment. That figure currently stands just above 5.5%, according to Patton, marking significant progress on the college's financial well-being since she stepped into office.

"We've really pushed on creating a stable environment for Middlebury where we're not spending our reserves and that was not the case when I got here, and I think everyone is piled in and really done it well," Patton said.

She has overseen the early years of the "For Every Future: The Campaign For Middlebury" fundraising campaign, which has already raised over $485 million towards its goal of $600 million by 2028. Under her tenure, the college has announced plans to demolish Battell Hall and replace it with a new art museum, which Patton hopes will centralize the arts scene on campus long after she departs next month.

Patton said the next president must also guide Middlebury through the threat posed to higher education by the incoming Trump administration.

"The main thing we need to do is think about protecting our students now in anticipation of what might happen, which is the art of administration," Patton said. "I think it would be better for us to lock down the preventative measures just in case, rather than go down a rabbit hole of planning for 20 different scenarios when we don't know exactly what's going to happen."

Maintaining community, inclusivity and a sense of belonging will be important in approaching the uncertainty that lies ahead, Patton said.

She also reflected on the student protests that have transpired at Middlebury during her time as president and on the importance of productive arguments.

"The fundamental right to freedom of expression is the bedrock for all of us, and I think we need to be super clear on that and and then move to being super clear on how we think about protest policies in terms of time, place, and manner. That is a separate thing," she said. "And as long as those kinds of guardrails are put in place, we should have a strong tradition of students speaking out on things they care about."

Protests have rocked Middlebury's regular routine, from backlash to Charles Murray in 2017 to the Gaza Solidarity Encampment last May; these protests have forced a reckoning with a vision of Middlebury that Patton described in her 2015 inaugural address as a place "impassioned arguments" should be encouraged to thrive.

Patton shared her memories of student protests and such arguments at the college. Not every student and administrator involved in planning Energy2028 agreed on the best way to carry it out, nor on whether or not to reduce the credit requirement to tackle student stress, nor on how to best promote the arts on campus in conversations about Nocturne Arts Festival, an annual campus tradition Patton is particularly passionate about.

"If we want to have really faithful arguments with more wisdom and deeper respect, the arts is a very powerful way to do that. And the people who've told us that and taught us that are our students, and they continue to be students," she said.

In recent months, the offices of college and university presidents across the country have come under intense scrutiny, especially in light of increased student protest movements surrounding the war in Gaza and discussions about the role of higher education institutions in a world of emerging AI. Patton addressed the criticism and doubt that college presidents face, commenting that many people overlook the president's commitment to their institution in lieu of more speculative claims about personal gain.

"People often don't understand that you're actually not in the job for the ulterior motive thing, and everyone on your team is about service to the institution. I do really believe that Middlebury ethos of having a low ego and high impact," Patton said.

Patton also mentioned that, as the college's first female president, she faced a particular brand of skepticism; she said that, when intentionally taking time to make an administrative decision, Patton said she was often labeled as indecisive rather than thoughtful.

Patton holds her scholarship and role as an intellectual leader close, having taught courses in religion during her time at Middlebury. She mentioned how the Bhagavad Gita, a Hindu scriptural text, has shaped her approach to leadership.

"The fundamental teaching of the Gita is that you should do what's right. Then you have to also educate yourself on what the best moral choice is in any given situation. In my case, it was what's right for Middlebury," Patton said. "When you're in a tough spot as a leader in a hyperpolarized world, the only thing you can do is carry yourself with dignity and be true to your values."

Patton said her original plan was to stay on until 2028, when more projects would be accomplished, but she still feels proud of her nearly 10 years spent at the college. She credited these achievements to the synergy between her own visions and the aspirations of the broader Middlebury community.

"Every single dream I've had to build at Middlebury, I've been able to accomplish either fully or mostly, and that's an extraordinary thing to say. It speaks so well of the fit between what I wanted to accomplish and what the community was willing to do," Patton explained.

With those projects now coming to fruition, Patton will move on to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in January, where she will serve as president after first being elected to the Academy's membership in 2018.

Still, despite her departure, Patton said Middlebury will remain important to her (she plans to maintain a residence in Shoreham, Vt.), and she remains faithful in the spirit of the school and the people who make it.

"I would say I have profound confidence that Middlebury's soul is only going to get brighter, even in some pretty turbulent times ahead," she said.

COLLEGE TO CONDUCT FIRST SHELTER-IN-PLACE DRILL THIS WEEK

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also used during a stabbing on College Street last March.

"We want the community to learn how to respond to these situations in a drill, rather than if an incident actually took place and we had to learn about this after something has occurred," Brown said. "Students that I have spoken with have been overall positive in their reactions to the planned drill."

Kirby echoed that sentiment, adding that the date and time of this exercise were intended to ensure that at least some classes would be in session without creating excessive disruption.

"We listened to our community in the wake of the active shooter hoax two springs ago and we listened to our students when they said this drill was something that would help them," Kirby said. "We looked at other NESCACs, we looked at other schools in Vermont, and it's pretty common to see them do emergency preparedness drills."

As part of their community outreach before the planned exercise, the college has posted notices on social media in addition to Kirby's earlier emails, and Public Safety has been tabling around campus to discuss the issue with students in person.

"Our goal for these drills is about once a semester. We can also start to integrate the RAVE emergency notification system into future drills, rather than making them separate tests of Middlebury's emergency preparedness," Brown said.

The topic of the emergency drill was raised at the November Faculty Council meeting, where some faculty questioned the timing of the drill as well as its implications for the community.

"Could it possibly be moved to 2:05 p.m.? I teach from 1:10 to 2 p.m. on Fridays," one faculty member asked. Another questioned the timing on the second-to-last day of classes and only a few days before finals take place.

"I don't teach at that time, so this doesn't affect me, but it strikes me that, essentially, almost the last day of classes is not the right time to do the first one of these," the faculty member added.

Members of the Faculty Council encouraged the gathered professors to accept the drills and stressed that the timeline was not changeable, despite several questions regarding the issues.

"I just wonder if we've given thought to whether or not the trade-offs are worthwhile and whether this actually does anything other than sort of get everybody stressed out," a third professor said.

When asked about these concerns, members of the administration and Public Safety emphasized the importance of emergency preparedness and the urgent need to implement this kind of training on campus.

Kirby encouraged students to participate in the drill this week and to familiarize themselves with MiddAlert.net where updates will be publicized during emergency situations. After this Friday, she expects Public Safety will review feedback from staff running the drill and community participants with an eye toward another test in the spring.

"We'll begin discussing what the spring semester drill will look like with faculty in January," she said.

Indigenous students reflect on struggle for visibility

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Since then, the club has grown in size and its offerings on campus for students with indigenous backgrounds, according to Emma Wilson '27, the current president of VIP.

"The event that went on the best this year was our Indigenous People's Day movie share. We watched There's Something in the Water, and we had faculty and students come. We got to hit some hard stuff, and also just be together," Wilson said.

Despite the club's successful revival last year, it continues to face challenges, according to Wilson, who spoke to the lack of indigenous representation and community spaces on campus.

"We try to make it half affinity and half activism based. We're really just trying to provide a space for any indigenous affiliating students on campus," Wilson said. "We're open to whoever is interested in indigenous justice."

Middlebury's indigenous community remains a small portion of the student body. According to the 2024–2025 Common Data Set, which uses federal reporting guidelines for identity rather than self-reporting, there is only one currently enrolled student who identifies as American Indian or Alaska Native, and none identify as Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander. Last year's Zeitgeist survey found that seven students self-identified as the former category, and six in the latter.

Several liberal arts colleges have seen continual discussions and efforts to better educate and celebrate Indigenous history and to explore ways to build respectful relationships between Indigenous-identifying populations and people who call these Native lands home today, and Middebury is no exception. Last spring, Dartmouth College hosted the Ivy Native Council Conference, which welcomed student representatives from all eight Ivy League colleges and Middlebury.

"I'd say that because we're still at risk of going dormant again because of the lack of Native American Students on campus. We're working with admissions, and they've gone to schools all around the country [saying] 'Why don't you choose Middlebury?' And they [prospective students] always say, 'There's no Indigenous Studies Department'," Wilson said.

An Action Plan for Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion passed by Middlebury College in 2020 detailed goals "to recruit, hire, mentor and retain faculty and staff from Black, Indigenous, people of color, and historically underrepresented groups." However, according to Wilson, the college has not made visible progress towards recruiting faculty members with indigenous backgrounds.

Wilson explained that VIP has been working with the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (OIDEI) on the possibility of creating an academic cluster dedicated to Indigenous Studies.

"The idea is to have professors who have expertise in the field and are interested in teaching to offer classes. It's not like an Indigenous Studies department, but it would be as close as we can get to that," she said.

Despite recent successful events, Hare believes there are still funding barriers to improving the well-being of Indigenous students on campus.

"A challenge is definitely the continued under-investment in Native American students. I feel this goes for students of color in general. I think a lot of our services just get clumped into one that the AFC has to take care of, or it usually relies on student organizations to uphold traditions," she said.

Hare has also been using her capacity as a climate action fellow to support VIP financially in planning for events. She feels that their collaboration with the Vermont Releaf Collective to host a discussion panel has been especially rewarding.

"We just talked for an hour about what it meant to be Indigenous and share our own personal stories. The premise was so simple, but it also was groundbreaking, because it literally is so hard to just talk, see older people and have someone to look up to," Hare said.

Wilson told The Campus that she and other club members look forward to planning more joint events and collaborations with other existing student organizations such as West Asian and North African Students (WANAS), Middlebury Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) and Middlebury Women of Color (WOC). Their short-term vision is focused on further publicizing the existence of VIP.

"Right now what we're trying to do is have more fun events to just get people interested and excited to start building a community. We need people to come and get the word out there," Wilson said.

Hare told The Campus that the Indigenous Justice Coalition (IJC) has also been a source of affirmation and inspiration. IJC was formed after Daniel Silva, associate professor of Luso-Hispanic Studies, wrote an op-ed for The Campus in December 2021 calling for the college to take further steps to address its complicity in the colonial past. Associate Laboratory Professor and College Lands Conservationist Marc Lapin — a member of the land acknowledgment board — reached out to him about the idea of IJC, envisioning students, staff and faculty mobilizing to support indigenous land justice.

"We gathered a lot of momentum in terms of mobilizing across campus, with the size of the group growing consistently and exponentially over the course of the last few years," Silva wrote in an email to The Campus.

While part of the goal is the establishment of an Indigenous Studies Department, Silva also emphasized the importance of addressing land dispossession of local Indigenous people.

"Another goal has been to push the college to redistribute a significant portion of its land holdings in Vermont to Western Abenaki communities; land holdings that were unceded by, yet dispossessed from, Indigenous people, and for whom land is a living space that one lives with rather than as a piece of property," Silva wrote.

Hare has participated in IJC since her sophomore year, which she said has formed an essential body to discuss indigenous life on campus.

"I was really glad that this group existed. It just showed that people cared, and people were talking about it even though it wasn't leading to action steps at the time. It was just great to meet those faculty and staff and to have someone to lean on," Hare added.

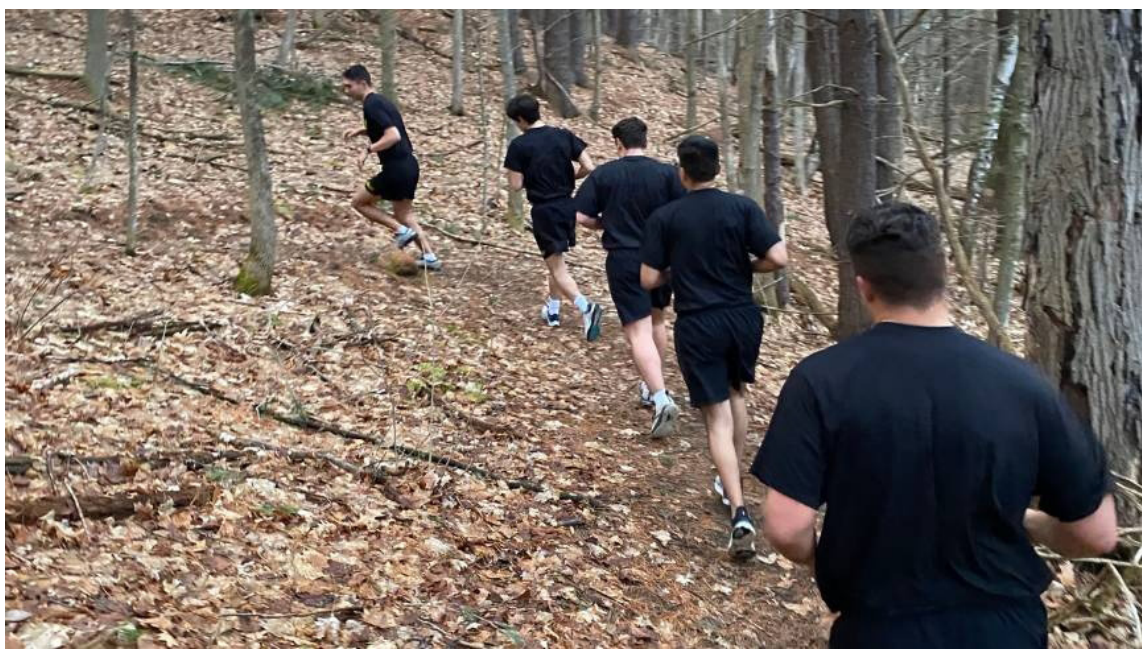
Although Silva believes that the barriers to initiating desired changes are deeply rooted, he shared that grassroots movements like IJC will continue to work toward their goals.

"The struggle for indigenous sovereignty and against settler colonialism is a continuous one, and I feel fortunate to be in community with many colleagues and students that are invested in that struggle and many related ones," he wrote.

COURTESY PHOTO/ JENNIFER MORTON-DOW

VIP hosted a discussion panel featuring Indigenous voices from Vermont Releaf, a network for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). From left to right: Nadia Hare '25, Emma Wilson '27, M Barney, Samantha Langevin and Jennifer Morton-Dow

Students who serve: how Middlebury's ROTC program nurtures future Army officers



COURTESY PHOTO / MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE

Middlebury ROTC, which has eight members, holds workouts and class time to prepare students for the Army.

Continued from Page 1

joining the Army prior to attending Middlebury, his family background and the flexibility of the college's program encouraged him to participate.

"Middlebury's ROTC program gave me the opportunity to get a feel for what the Army could be like post graduation without any post-graduation obligations," Wendell wrote in a message to The Campus, "and I have since made some of the best memories of my life in the program."

He added that the initial experience in ROTC made him continue the program and led to Wendell committing to active duty service in the Army following his graduation.

Students joining ROTC do not have to commit to joining the Army as first years; they have up until their junior year to make the decision to contract into the Army. However, the preparation to become an officer is intense from the start of the program.

The ROTC experience at Middlebury is part classroom, part exercise and part hands-on learning, according to Cook, who is wrapping up her first semester in the program. While still in training, cadets are separated by class year, and each successive year in the program they are tasked with more responsibility and leadership.

"A real key to ROTC is that it's separated by class, meaning that different classes have different responsibilities. As a freshman, my role is focused on learning the basics of ROTC, but as I advance in the program I will take on increased responsibilities, teaching and leading my fellow cadets," Cook wrote.

Yet while roles and duties are delineated strictly by class, Cook stressed that Middlebury ROTC cadets work as a team.

"It's really important to note that even though we're separated by class to some extent, we all do the activities just at different levels. And a major focus is on our working together to accomplish each task, which results in our being one strong and cohesive team," she wrote.

Wendell agreed that the education he receives from the training program has proved beneficial. He noted the commitment to ROTC has helped him develop skills such as time management.

"While we do have to balance outside commitments with school work, the program and my commitments that have resulted from it have definitely not negatively affected my time in college and has provided an opportunity to try things and meet people I never would have without it," Wendell wrote.

As part of the program, cadets must attend regular physical training, classes and lab sessions, which are held at a military camp in Colchester, Vt.

"ROTC labs are held at Camp Johnson and consist of field exercises, such as learning land navigation in daylight and in the dark, survival skills (especially in Vermont's cold winter), medical preparedness in case of emergencies in the field and in daily life," Cook wrote.

She added that the labs also help cadets learn about and practice a wide breadth of possible roles.

"We've even had the opportunity to explore possible future career paths in the military on our recent trip to one of the National Guard's bases in VT where we studied Army aviation practices and skills," Cook wrote.

The workouts and labs work simultaneously towards a commission and a degree. Completing the first two years of ROTC counts for one academic credit, the junior and senior year programs count for one each, and the program fulfills a P.E. credit at Middlebury.

Cadets are also able to apply for generous scholarships that cover tuition at the college in addition to a $420 monthly stipend and $1,200 per year for textbooks. Students can receive two types of scholarships, one that can be applied for during high school and another that one applies for once they have joined ROTC at Middlebury.

Another merit of Middlebury ROTC is the connections it provides to neighboring Vermont colleges. Cook told The Campus that she collaborates with 60 other students from nearby colleges because Middlebury partners with UVM for ROTC.

President Laurie Patton recognized the impact of Middlebury's ROTC program in a Middlebury Magazine titled "Wired for Service" from 2021. Reflecting on Veterans Day that year, Patton wrote of the importance of military service for Middlebury students looking to serve their domestic and international communities.

"Middlebury students have served and sacrificed in the military — some giving their lives — throughout American history, through times of peace and times of war. Middlebury's student population was heavily influenced by those choosing ROTC in the mid-20th century," Patton wrote.

Some students on campus noted a similar effect of the program on campus; although they make up a relatively small portion of the student body, Middlebury's ROTC members are unmistakable when spotted in their Army uniforms every Wednesday.

"I often see them in the gym during my workouts and am consistently impressed by their ethic and dedication," Chloe Filipowicz '28 said. "With heightened global tensions, it's inspiring to see Middlebury students training to protect America and freedom abroad."

Harry Revenaugh '28 shared his admiration for the program as well, even though he was unable to join ROTC due to time constraints from playing on the Middlebury squash team.

"I wanted to join because it's a pipeline to becoming an officer in the army and being in the Army is a great way to serve the nation," Revenaugh said. "Middlebury ROTC is one of the top programs in the nation."

The ROTC program at UVM in which Middlebury participates has been recognized in recent years for its impressive instruction. The MacArthur Award is awarded to the best program out of the 42 located in the northeast; last year the program ranked third for the award.

"The criterion for winning this award is based on Cadet achievement in academics, Cadet SummerTraining,extracurricular activities, demonstrated level of responsibility, and much more," Lieutenant Colonel and UVM Professor of Military Science Travis McCracken wrote in the fall 2023 UVM Army ROTC newsletter.

Wendell shared that the UVM program is up for consideration as the best Army ROTC program in the country, an honor which he attributed to the unique group of people across Vermont who chose to serve.

"I truly feel that is mainly due to the people and culture in this program that set us apart from our peer programs," Wendell wrote.

Editor's Note: Editor in Chief Ryan McElroy '25 contributed reporting to this article.

REBATES TO VERMONTERS IMPACTED BY FLOODS EXTENDED INTO 2025

By MANDY BERGHELA
Senior Local Editor

COURTESY PHOTO / EFFICIENCY VERMONT
Vermonters hit hard by the 2023 and 2024 floods have access to rebates to help repair their homes and businesses.

Efficiency Vermont has expanded its flood recovery rebates, offering significant financial assistance to eligible households and businesses affected by the flooding during the summers of 2023 and 2024 for heating systems, weatherization and appliances. Homeowners can receive up to $29,500 in rebates, while businesses are eligible for up to $16,000 in cash back on essential equipment and upgrades.

Efficiency Vermont, established in 2000 as the nation's first Energy Efficiency Utility, is committed to helping Vermonters lower their energy use, reduce utility costs and cut greenhouse gas emissions, according to their website.

Public Relations Manager with Efficiency Vermont Matthew Smith explained in an interview with The Campus how the operations of Efficiency Vermont expand across the whole state.

"Efficiency Vermont is overseen by the state's utility regulators, just like the electric and gas and telecom companies that work in Vermont. So we work with partners statewide on energy savings goals and emissions reductions goals for homes and businesses. We recognized that flood repair does not just take a year, which is why it was extended," Smith said.

"I'm grateful to Gov. Phil Scott, the Emergency Board, the PSD [Vermont Public Service Department], and other state partners for making these offers available to those harmed by another year of damaging floods," wrote Peter Walke, managing director of Efficiency Vermont, in a press release."These rebates will help Vermonters rebuild homes that are healthy, safe, and more efficient. We're eager to get these offers out to anyone impacted by these floods to help make their recovery more affordable."

The funding available for homeowners is comprehensive, covering a number of damages caused by or impacted by the flooding.

Among the rebates for homeowners are a $10,000 rebate for heating and appliance upgrades, up to $9,500 for insulation and air sealing improvements and a maximum $10,000 rebate for any rearrangements or replacements of solar panels.

Homeowners are also eligible for a free, 90-minute consultation with Efficiency Vermont experts to determine their specific recovery needs and interest-free loans going all the way to $30,000.

Rebates for households are limited to Vermont residents and are funded by the federal government through federal flooding relief money, according to Smith.

Only low-moderate income households are eligible to receive the rebates, and eligibility depends per county and per members in household.

Businesses are also eligible for rebates to support flood relief efforts, which includes equipment upgrades and weatherization improvements. These funds come from Efficiency Vermont's normal funds , which is financed by anyone who pays an electric bill. This charge provides a steady funding source for energy efficiency initiatives.

Business rebates include up to $10,000 to help landlords replace damaged heaters and appliances, $4,000 per piece of kitchen equipment and $9,000 for businesses to improve building envelopes and ventilation systems.

Homeowners and businesses can access these rebates through the Efficiency Vermont website.

"The best place to start is with a Free Virtual Home Energy Visits to assess recovery options," Smith said. "There is a version of this free consultation for businesses as well. It's about a 90-minute video assessment of a home by an Efficiency Vermont energy expert, providing guidance on each home's specific needs."

For those individuals with higher incomes who are not eligible, Efficiency Vermont offers many other rebates that are available for all.

"We have some rebates for renters," Smith said. "We offer 100 dollars in rebates for air conditioners, other cooling, and for washing and drying machines. We also have free products such as lightbulbs for those who need it."

Currently, there are no expiration dates for the program, and it will extend into the next year.

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MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE DOESN'T HAVE A CHEATING PROBLEM. IT HAS AN HONOR CODE PROBELM.

Op-Ed

Cole Siefer *is a member of the class of 2025.*

Anyone paying attention to higher education can clearly see that institutions have a cheating problem. Cheating first exploded during the Covid-19 pandemic and has only continued to rise with the dawn of generative artificial intelligence. This has led to a moment of reckoning for many institutions: How do we reconcile our traditional honor codes with the modern reality of widespread cheating?

The erosion of trust caused by cheating is especially damaging to a small, residential liberal arts community like Middlebury. At the end of my first year, my psychology professor caught an organized cheating ring in his senior-level seminar. He then sought departmental approval to proctor exams for all his courses and has not looked back since. Incidents like these are a tragedy for the Middlebury community. How can we expect our graduates to be thoughtful and ethical leaders," as the Middlebury website proudly states, when we cannot trust our students to meet the standards of academic integrity?

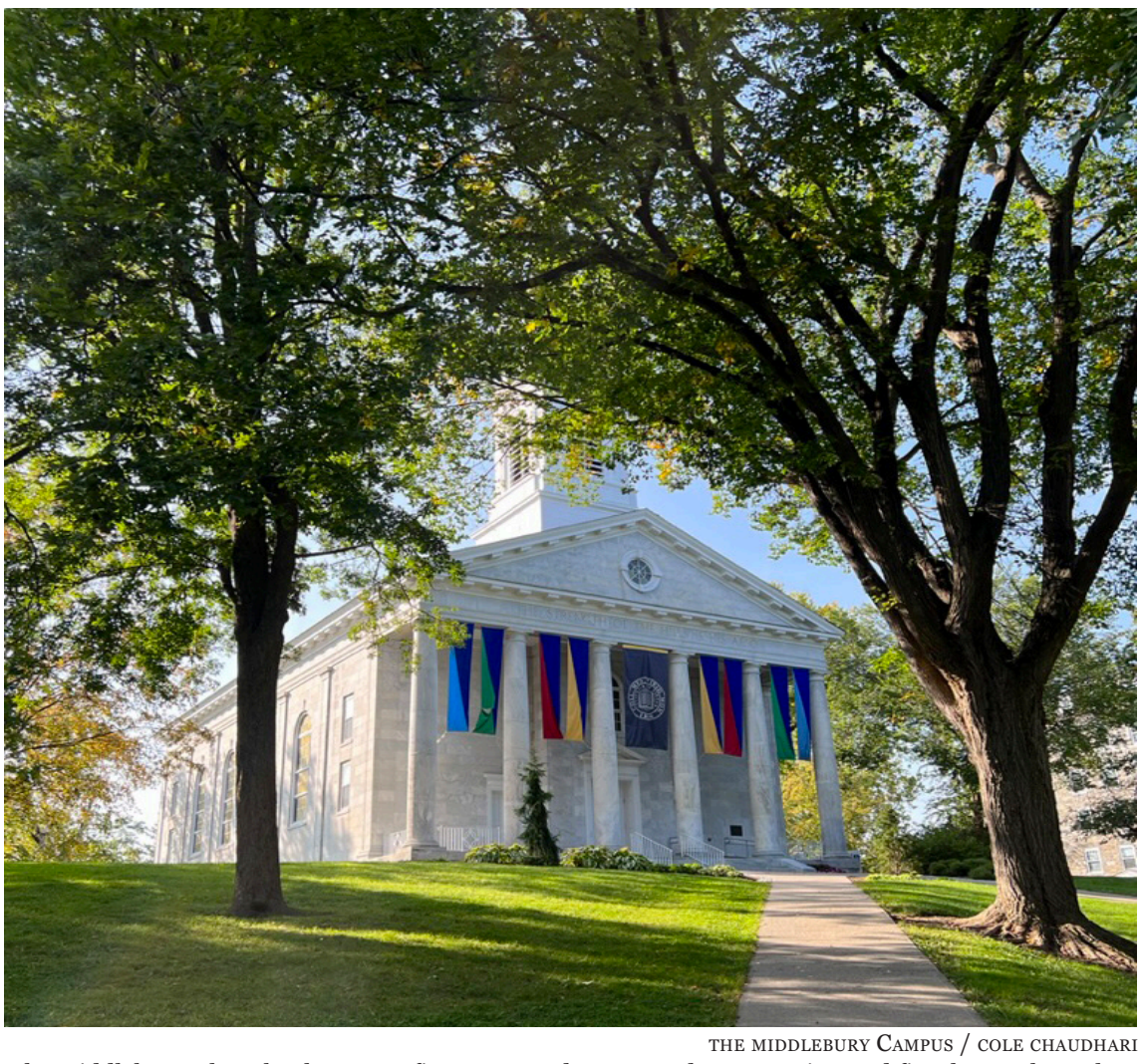
You may think this will be an op-ed calling for stiffer punishments, blanket permission to proctor exams and the construction of an academic panopticon on Battell Beach. However, I do not think such sweeping measures are a productive or valid response to increased cheating or the shortcomings of the college's Honor Code. Instead, I believe we need thoughtful reforms to the Honor Code paired with targeted enhancements to the test-taking system.

The Honor Code is no longer present in the minds of students. As a peer writing tutor for the CTLR, I have had countless students ask me what the Honor Code is, how to sign it on their assignments and what it actually means. As students no longer physically sign the Honor Code during their orientation week, its ritual and ceremonial dimension is lost. Can we be surprised that students don't follow the Honor Code if we do not continually demonstrate its significance or teach it?

We should reinstate signing the Honor Code during orientation to establish its importance for each incoming Middlebury class. Studies investigating cheating behaviors have found that students learn how to cheat from their peers, which emphasizes the importance of early intervention. The signing could be coupled with workshops that engage students in discussions about academic integrity and why it matters, framing the Honor Code as a shared commitment rather than a passive agreement.

Considering the pace at which tools like ChatGPT are developing, and the near impossibility of accurately detecting their use, our efforts are better spent modifying the environment and behavior of the students that use AI. Faculty should design assessments that are less conducive to cheating, such as open-book exams, sit-down written essays or assignments that require critical thinking and unique applications of knowledge. Professors should also exercise their right to proctor exams, especially after instances of cheating. This will demonstrate the cause-and-effect of academic dishonesty. Research also indicates that reminding students of academic integrity policies and the consequences of cheating significantly reduces dishonest behavior during exams. Middlebury should incorporate such reminders before tests to reinforce awareness and uphold academic honesty.

When violations of the Honor Code do occur, our goal should not be to shame and expel. Instead, we should focus on educating and reforming. Reflection essays and community service tied to academic workshops would educate rather than purely punish. Such nuanced and holistic approaches would be aligned with Middlebury's commitment to using restorative practices and would improve upon the complexities of the existing system, where the default punishment is suspension.



THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS / COLE CHAUDHARI

The Middlebury Chapel, where new first year students attend Convocation and first learn about the college's shared values that define the Honor Code.

While studies have found compelling evidence that close monitoring strategies can eliminate cheating, we should measure these interventions against the ideals of the Honor Code. Yes, the scrutiny of more proctors for in-person exams or lockdown browsers for online exams would probably significantly reduce cheating. But these measures would alienate us from the spirit of the Honor Code. The goal of any policy changes to the Honor Code or test-taking processes at Middlebury should not be to eliminate cheating by any means necessary, but instead to rebuild trust and accountability.

While institutions like Middlebury must foster academic integrity, students are not blameless. Cheating is a choice, and upholding the Honor Code starts with individual accountability. Tools like ChatGPT may tempt dishonesty, but trust in our community depends on students choosing integrity, even when no one is watching.

Middlebury should aim for reforms that uphold the spirit of the Honor Code while addressing modern challenges to academic integrity. By reinforcing the code's visibility, fostering a deeper understanding of its importance, and combining trust with practical safeguards, we can rebuild a culture where integrity is not enforced but embraced. This approach aligns with Middlebury's mission to prepare ethical leaders and shows that maintaining academic honesty in a changing

SPECS PANTHER:
A review of recent sexual health legislation in Vermont

SPECS Panther is a mascot for SPECS (sex positive education for college students) and serves the Middlebury community. As a part of Health & Wellness Education, SPECS Panther seeks to educate and spark independent dialogue, not be the end-all be-all resource on campus. We encourage Midd Kids to break down the walls of silence by engaging in sex-positive conversation — wherever, with whomever, and about whatever is most comfortable, easy, and safe for you. Our editions will be educational!

Op-Ed

El Fahey *is a member of the class of 2026 and SPECS Peer-educator.*

Did you know that Vermont, via Proposition 5, was the first state to enshrine the right to an abortion in its state constitution just two years ago? Vermont policymakers have been spearheading the movement toward a more inclusive version of sexual health care and reproductive justice. At SPECS, we affirm that everybody deserves access to accurate information regarding their bodies and reproductive health care, especially pertaining to their legal rights.

This semester, I had the opportunity to meet state Senator Ruth Hardy (D-Addison) and discuss Act 100, the most recent sexual health legislation enacted, and how Vermont is setting an example for the rest of the nation. After previously taking her class "Gender & Public Policy in the U.S." in fall 2023, I was inspired to reflect on the importance of lawmakers in enacting change that directly affects people's health and sexual lives. In class, students were assigned to do case study reports on relevant sexual health legislation, and it proved how crucial it is for citizens to be cognizant of their own rights and lack thereof. With the knowledge from the course, the interview with Hardy and other combined research, here is a breakdown of three critical Vermont sexual health policies.

H.40 (Act 100):

Act 100, or House Bill 40, was introduced by state Representative Barbara Rachelson (D-Chittenden) and enacted this past May. The law states that "No person shall intentionally and without consent remove or tamper with a condom prior to or during a sexual act in a manner likely to render it ineffective for its common purpose." For example, if someone nonconsensually removes a condom during a sexual act when their partner had an explicit understanding that protection would be used, the partner can now press charges and bring a civil suit to the Vermont Superior Court for compensatory and punitive actions. Hardy explained her decision to vote for Act 100 as an easy one to make.

"This is a bill that keeps people safe in their sexual interactions with partners and makes sure it prioritizes consent and prioritizes their own choice whether and how to have sex. It seemed like a no-brainer for me to support it, so I obviously voted yes on the Senate floor," Hardy said.

This legislation parallels the SPECS mission that centers consent, especially since students on college campuses are at an elevated risk of experiencing sexual violence. SPECS uses the Planned Parenthood FRIES model of consent (Freely given, Reversible, Informed, Enthusiastic and Specific). Act 100 addresses the 'informed' criteria, mandating sexual partners to have agreed-upon mutual consent on the exact conditions of using a sexually-protective device. While Act 100 is limited to condoms, a holistic examination of 'informed' consent must likewise include the status of a partner's birth control or if they have a transmissible Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI).

H.89 (Act 14):

Act 14, or House Bill 89, was enacted in May 2023 and sponsored by then-state Rep. Katherine Donnally (D-Lamoille), Rep. Martin LaLonde (D-Chittenden) and Rep. Taylor Small (P/D-Chittenden). This law functions as a health care shield-bill, meaning that it safeguards patients from receiving medical misinformation. It states that "interference with legally protected health care activity, whether or not under the color of law, is against the public policy of this State."

Access to reproductive and gender-affirming health care are cemented as legal rights in Vermont. Anonymity is ensured if someone fears for their safety, with a new confidentiality program developed by the Vermont Secretary of State. If there is any attempt at out-of-state legal action, extradition or subpoenas that attempt to punish or prevent a person from receiving or administering protected health care, this person is legally enabled to countersue for damages.

S.37 (Act 15):

Act 15, or Senate Bill 37, was enacted in May 2023 and was sponsored by Hardy, Sen. Virginia Lyons (D-Chittenden), Sen. Alison Clarkson (D-Windsor) and Sen. Kesha Ram Hinsdale (D-Chittenden). It is "an act relating to access to legally protected health care activity & regulation of health care providers." As another joint shield-bill, Acts 14 and 15 collectively represent, in simple legal terms, a defense against the highly complicated theory on abortion extraterritoriality.

Most importantly, the act limits non-licensed medical professionals from giving false medical advice and using ultrasound machines in Crisis Pregnancy Centers (CPCs). CPCs are pregnancy centers that spread

anti-abortion ideologies and present misleading medical information to vulnerable individuals to stop them from receiving an abortion, according to Planned Parenthood. These organizations are not new to Middlebury's campus, and student activist groups have previously protested against The Women's Center, a center in Addison County. Currently, Act 15 is being challenged in Vermont court by groups representing CPCs. At SPECS, we know that reproductive justice and abortion access are incredibly important and pertinent topics. By placing limits on this form of medical malpractice, Vermonters are protected from companies that attempt to restrict their reproductive liberties.

As for licensed medical professionals, Act 15 provides protection for employees in hospitals when performing gender-affirming care within Vermont state lines, defending these providers from abusive litigation. For individuals seeking gender-affirming care, Act 15 provides health insurance coverage and more medical protection. The law also provides protections for patients seeking abortions, ensuring they cannot be criminally charged out of state for receiving one. Additionally, the law grants pharmacists the ability to prescribe emergency contraception and allows universities to make contraceptives available in vending machines.

Acts 100, 14 and 15 are only the beginnings of a robust sexual health policy in Vermont. No matter the time or political climate, policymakers and citizens are continuously seeking beneficial change to advance legal equities. It is crucial to understand the realities of reproductive rights within Vermont and continue to push policymakers to promote bills that codify sexual-health related rights.

At SPECS, we believe that everyone should have accurate, up-to-date information regarding their legal rights both within and outside Vermont. Access to sexual health services and gender-affirming care is not just a privilege but a protected right, and we will continue empowering our fellow Midd Kids with the knowledge and resources on campus for how to exercise such rights.

Editor's Note: Addison County Senator Ruth Hardy is married to Professor of Film and Media Studies Jason Mittell, who serves as faculty adviser to The Campus. He had no role in the publication of this op-ed.

Five years adrift: Why hasn't Middlebury replaced the commons system?

Editorial

The editorial represents the opinion of the Middlebury Campus Editorial Board.

It's time to rethink how It's time to rethink how we organize our social life. For decades, Middlebury's social fabric was held together by structured environments — first by fraternities, until 1991, and then by the commons system, until 2019. Much of the fragmentation within the student body can be traced back to the evolution — or, more accurately, the erosion — of residential life and social houses.

Under the commons system, students lived with the same handful of people during their first two years here, including with a professor who served as the head of each commons. As such, students were far more likely to create long-lasting relationships from dorm life. Commons groups celebrated their smaller communities on campus with special mascots — Cook Commons was a flying pig, while Atwater repped a frog — and events unique to each commons group.

Since their dissolution, nothing has emerged to replace these two defining structures of the modern Middlebury experience. The loss of these overarching fixtures of Middlebury life has left first year students untethered on campus, an issue which compounds as they progress through the college.

The value of the commons system lay in the tight-knit residential communities and closer relationships between students and professors it fostered. While we do not call for its full revival — the commons system was unpopular at the time of its demise five years ago — the lack of a replacement has negatively impacted the college experiences of thousands of students at the college. We call for the creation of intentional community at Middlebury; the college should create more opportunities for students to bond and build relationships through their dorms and student organizations, which are not currently essential elements of most student's social life.

We think clubs have more potential to build community and a social culture of spontaneity than they are currently able to exercise. Part of the issue is that student organizations are bound by rules on events and funding imposed by the college and enforced by the Student Activities Office (SAO). Clubs are unable to host last-minute, free-style social events without far-advanced approval, which is often complicated to navigate.

Middlebury advertises hundreds of student organizations to prospective students as the clearest path to meeting friends with common interests and a guarantee of a robust and active social life. For this vision to become reality, we must streamline the process for spending club funding and approving events. Not every moment of a club's life needs to be registered with the SAO in Presence, and the rules are opaque and unclear for anyone unfamiliar with the student organization system.

If club leaders are expected to run hundreds of free, open meetings, events and trips each month — work that benefits both current students and appeals to prospective students — the college should recognize more flexibility in what is allowed and provide a faster timeline for approval. Students should be able to host a dorm game night in their lounge or bring people together for a club without navigating a bureaucratic approval process.

At the heart of forming intentional communities at Middlebury is the first year experience. A once-formative element of Middlebury's first year orientation that have dissipated in recent years are orientation trips. Replaced by smaller, half-day options at the end of orientation week, these trips once offered new students hours devoted solely toward group bonding, exploration, and new experiences. Now, with those multi-day trips exchanged for hours-long (and sometimes hastily led) smaller excursions, that intimate component of bonding has been lost.

First years living amongst their entire first year seminar group could provide a stronger, more immediate sense of community. As a first year, it is easy to feel overwhelmed by the amount of different social groups in one's orbit: hallmates, classmates and a student's orientation group are just a few examples. Condensing some of these groups could increase opportunities to form deeper bonds that last throughout a student's entire four years here. The best way to make and keep friends is through shared experiences, and Middlebury's programming should strive to provide those as often as possible. Aim for depth in relationships, not breadth.

Middlebury's recurring trend of over-enrollment of first year students presents a challenge to reinstituting a culture of strong social bonds on campus. The mounting number of students in need of housing has forced makeshift living spaces to be created in lounges and common rooms, removing areas where students used to spend time working, hanging out and getting to know one another.

This reconfiguration of residential space to accommodate more students has also been felt in specialty housing, which has become a dumping ground for students whom the college is unable to accommodate in normal dorms. The indiscriminate placement of students erodes the unique status of these houses and the central themes which motivate people to join them. For students looking to live in a particular language house, or students in need of substance-free housing, Special interest houses should remain available to meet those interests.

It may not be an easy or short-term task, but reimagining the limitations on Middlebury's social life is a vital project that requires ambitious thinking. The college's silence on this matter worries us — that Middlebury may have removed part of its core in 2019 without a way to reinvent itself in the five years that followed.

We have laid out a clear vision for Middlebury in which future generations of students can form stronger relationships with one another, uphold Middlebury's strong sense of community, and ensure no one is left behind. We call on the senior leadership of the college and Residential Life to consider the gaps left unfilled by the removal of the commons system, if not for us, for the class of 2029 and beyond.

Resilience in Port Elizabeth: My journey with I Protect Me

Op-Ed

Ruthie Brown *is a member of the class of 2025.5*

As a second-degree black belt and an International Global Studies major with a Global Gender and Sexuality concentration, I am interested in exploring how martial arts have the power to transform lives through empowerment and community-building. This past fall, that passion carried me over 9,000 miles to Port Elizabeth, South Africa, where I volunteered with I Protect Me (IPM), an organization dedicated to preventing domestic violence, sexual assault, femicide and teen pregnancy.

I Protect Me is a lifeline for communities grappling with systemic problems such as poverty and endemic violence. The organization not only provides crucial education and support services, but also creates meaningful employment opportunities that help break cycles of poverty and abuse. While the challenges facing communities in Port Elizabeth are significant — among young South Africans aged 15 to 34 the unemployment rate is 45.5% — IPM's holistic approach, combining practical skills training, violence prevention education and victim support networks, fosters positive change. With only two semesters left, I have begun to consider my post-grad plans, and after my experience in South Africa, my goal is to work for a non-profit organization focussed on preventing gender-based violence by working with local leaders in vulnerable communities.

To my fellow students: Our education is more than a degree. It is a tool for global understanding. We must look beyond the borders of our campus, recognizing that meaningful change happens through consistent, compassionate engagement with communities working towards equality.

IPM encourages resilience in the face of adversity, and Tyronese, one of the first friends I made in South Africa, embodies that spirit. Orphaned as a teenager, she became the guardian of her three younger brothers, sacrificing her own university dreams to be their caretaker. After enduring an abusive marriage and unimaginable personal loss, she found strength through IPM. Today, she is a leader within the organization, where she manages nearly 50 provincial employees and has even started her own event company.

Despite meeting inspiring young leaders like Tyronese, at times it was scary to live in Port Elizabeth. During my first week, five gunmen robbed a nearby elementary school, traumatizing children who were simply trying to learn. I will never forget the night my friends were sending rapid fire texts in our group chat about reuniting at Middlebury for the fall semester while I was hiding in my room because I heard gunshots. I later found out that two people had been murdered a block away. Soon afterwords, a student who attended the university just down the road from where I worked was raped walking home from school. The dissonance between my friends' updates from Middlebury and my new reality was striking. These incidents and Tyronese's own story were stark reminders of the complex realities facing communities like Port Elizabeth.

While in South Africa, I often pictured myself as a student there, and I imagine it would be very difficult to focus on studying with constant threats of violence. Middlebury provides a relatively protected environment that largely ensures that our learning goes uninterrupted — I don't have to be afraid or overly cautious walking to my daily classes. However, our privilege is not just about our physical safety, but also about the opportunity to critically examine and challenge these underlying structures.

But for every moment of fear, there were moments of pure joy. I'll never forget the elementary school classrooms where children lined up for hugs, eager to ask if I'd ever been to Starbucks and Target. And when two little girls told me I looked like Sabrina Carpenter, I couldn't help but giggle along with them. When I taught self-defense, I saw true transformation. Children and IPM employees alike left classes feeling physically stronger, less fearful and eager to learn more.

My primary goals for my time in Port Elizabeth were to learn from IPM and the expertise of its employees and to integrate a sustainable self-defense curriculum into their programs. To support the training I provided in person, I created instructional videos and a self-defense manual that IPM employees can refer to at any time so that they can continue to teach effective self-defense in classrooms. IPM also plans on sending these videos and manual to similar organizations in other African countries such as Nigeria.

This experience was more than volunteer work—it was a profound lesson in community resilience, the importance of grassroots organizations and the ongoing global fight against gender-based violence. As I complete my studies at Middlebury, I'm committed to continuing this work, inspired by the incredible individuals I met through IPM. My journey underscores the vital message to my fellow students: our education is not confined to campus walls, but a powerful catalyst for global understanding and meaningful change.

THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS/RUTHIE BROWNN

Brown volunteering with I Protect Me in South Africa.

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The Middlebury Campus

KING LEAR ENDEARS NEW GENERATION TO TIMELESS CLASSIC

By CHRISTY LIANG
Contributing Writer

From Nov. 14 – 16, the Middlebury community enjoyed a dazzling production of one of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies, King Lear. Enthralling visual effects and costume design, original musical innovations, and a dynamic cast breathed contemporary life into this timeless classic, leaving audiences in rapt awe.

King Lear, played by Professor of Theater Alex Draper, embodied a dramatic untangling of a strong but deeply flawed personality. From the beginning, Lear is a well-intentioned man lacking balance. In the infamous scene where his youngest and favorite daughter Cordelia, played by Patrice Cahill '25.5, refuses to shower him with effusive proclamations of love, he casts her away with no possessions. The audience then witnesses Lear's descent into madness as his power drains away and into the hands of his other two daughters, Goneril and Regan, who take advantage of his old age and their newfound inheritances to gradually but resolutely usurp him.

In this new adaptation by Associate Professor of Theatre Michole Biancosino, music becomes an important added dimension and an inspired production design invites a certain charm. The incorporation of live musical transitions between scenes and actors singing original compositions on stage helped the audience feel more immediately connected to the energies of different characters.

Conscientious thought and careful collaboration also went into the costume design. Visiting Assistant Professor of Theater Summer Jack, who was in charge of the show's costume design, took inspiration from red carpet aesthetics like high fashion imagery and runway shows.

"The beauty of costume design is you have about 30 seconds when each actor walks on stage and presents their personality before they even say a line," Jack said in an interview with The Campus. "The innovative side for our version of King Lear is that it's not medieval, but very contemporary. I think it's much more exciting this way as the audience can see themselves on stage dressed in a similar way."

Many of the elaborate costumes were sewed from scratch by students who work for the costume shop, carefully tailored to each actor and intentionally distressed where needed. "It is a lot about searching the world for the right pair of shoes," Jack said.

Yet, the most striking part of watching the play was the dynamic and talented cast. Everyone embodied their role convincingly while maintaining strong relational energies with one another and at times, directly addressing the audience.

Thomas Long '25, who played Edmund, the play's main antagonist, shared his experience working on the production with The Campus.

"Playing Edmund felt like playing several different characters. When he's around noble and pompous figures like the knights, I try to look very presentational and put together. Towards the end of the show when he's getting what he wants, he lets go of that uprightness a little bit. That's where I try to channel a more feral and intense and animalistic energy, " he said.

COURTESY PHOTO / CLINTONBPHOTOGRAPHY

Patrice Cahill '25.5 as Cordelia and Professor of theater Alex Draper as King Lear.

Karina Lea '27, who played one of the knights, shared her evolving relationship with the elusive language of the script.

"Shakespeare's language requires movement through space to be conveyed properly. The first three times I read King Lear, I was very confused. It gets a lot easier to understand when you're up (on stage) walking around as opposed to sitting and looking at the huge chunks of text," Lea said.

Professor Draper provided helpful suggestions to the cast regarding the script, such as adding a line to provide more clarity.

The cast's lively performances were audibly well-received by the audience. Outbursts of applause and laughter were heard throughout the two-hour long production. Graydon Hanson '25, the assistant backstage manager, acknowledged this heartening aspect of theater in an interview with The Campus.

"One audience laughs at something and another doesn't. It's fun to see how the different performances can evolve and grow depending on the mood of the day."

It is grueling work to get a play ready, and a lot of it goes unnoticed backstage. A play's immersiveness thrives on immaculate lighting, sounds, blocking and seamless transition between constructed spaces, which this production succeeded in achieving, thanks to everyone on and off stage.

In the tragic ending of the play in which all three sisters perish and King Lear dies of heartbreak, Shakespeare leaves us exhausted, saddened and wondering poignantly: "Is this the promis'd end?" The play is surely more than a comment on senility or sibling rivalry, or even duplicity and greed. It reminds us that life is very hard and uncertain, that one can never fully plan for all eventualities and that there is no substitute for moral rectitude, wisdom, understanding and patience.

COURTESY PHOTO / CLINTONBPHOTOGRAPHY

Owen Foberg '27.5 and Owen McCarthy '25 as Edgar and King Lear.

COURTESY PHOTO / CLINTONBPHOTOGRAPHY

Thomas Long '25 as Edmund.

DREAMING WITH SEAN DORSEY DANCE

By NORAH KHAN
Arts & Culture Editor

Sean Dorsey Dance graced the halls of the Mahaney Arts Center from Nov. 15 –16 to share their new project, titled "THE LOST ART OF DREAMING."

The performance was a beautiful mixture of spoken word, expressive dance and queer joy. The central theme, "DREAMING IS YOUR BIRTHRIGHT," was framed by 16 unique and interconnected dances, each underscored by intricate and elaborate costumes.

The universe played an important role in the first part of the show through its significant focus on the connection between humans and stars. Dorsey encouraged the audience to think of themselves relative to stardust and the fabric of the universe. Exploring the idea of stardust aimed to share how each and every individual is essentially made of the materials stars — carbon, oxygen and other elements. This idea invited the audience to consider themselves as a part of something bigger than the confinements of their bodies and to embrace an expansive imagination where we are all a unique and magical part of the universe.

Within the performance, Dorsey pushed the crowd to propel themselves forward to imagine a brighter future for all people.

Audience member Samia Adjei '27 felt the bond between the dancers and the audience.

"The performance sort of created a community between the audience and the dancers where, it felt like we weren't simply viewing a show but were a part of a larger message." she said in an interview with The Campus.

"PLEASURE REVOLUTION" was arguably the most energetic and upbeat section of the performance. It focused on self-admiration and pleasure; the dancers moved to the with an energy of an empowering level of self-love and confidence.

Another standout number, "ORION", told the stories of several constellations in our night sky. Each dancer personified a famous constellation while Dorsey spoke about the beauty and strength of each cluster of stars. Flowy blue costumes punctuated the galactic story telling.

Dorsey, a San Francisco native, is a multi-talented choreographer, dancer, teacher and trans activist. He is recognized as the first acclaimed transgender modern dance choreographer in the U.S., and has performed his work in more than 35 cities in the U.S. and abroad. Outside of his dance company, he is the founder and artistic director of Fresh Meat Productions, a non-profit organization that creates and commissions art and programs to advocate for intersectional justice and equity to lift up trans and gender non-conforming artists as change makers.

The show, which debuted in 2022 in California, and will be performed in over 10 cities along its international tour, saw five members of the dance group perform: Sean Dorsey, Brandon Graham, Héctor Jaime, David Le and Nol Simonse —- all queer, gender-non-conforming and trans dancers. Each dancer has their own impressive resume of experiences and brought their own passion to the performance.

This idea felt especially powerful in correlation with the expression of trans joy, especially in the world's ever changing political and social climate. In such contentious times, the night felt like a love letter to marginalized communities who face violence for simply existing as themselves.

Dina Bazou '25 was completely in love with the performance.

"I just loved it from the beginning to the end. The first dance starts with a bit of connection, connecting to oneself connecting to each other. And the idea that we're made of stardust, it makes me appreciate life a little bit more and each other a little bit more, because it really weaves in that connection that we have with ourselves. And it celebrates joy and pleasure for life and each other," she said.

One audience member who grew up in Middlebury and now lives in Maine, traveled back to watch the show for a second time.

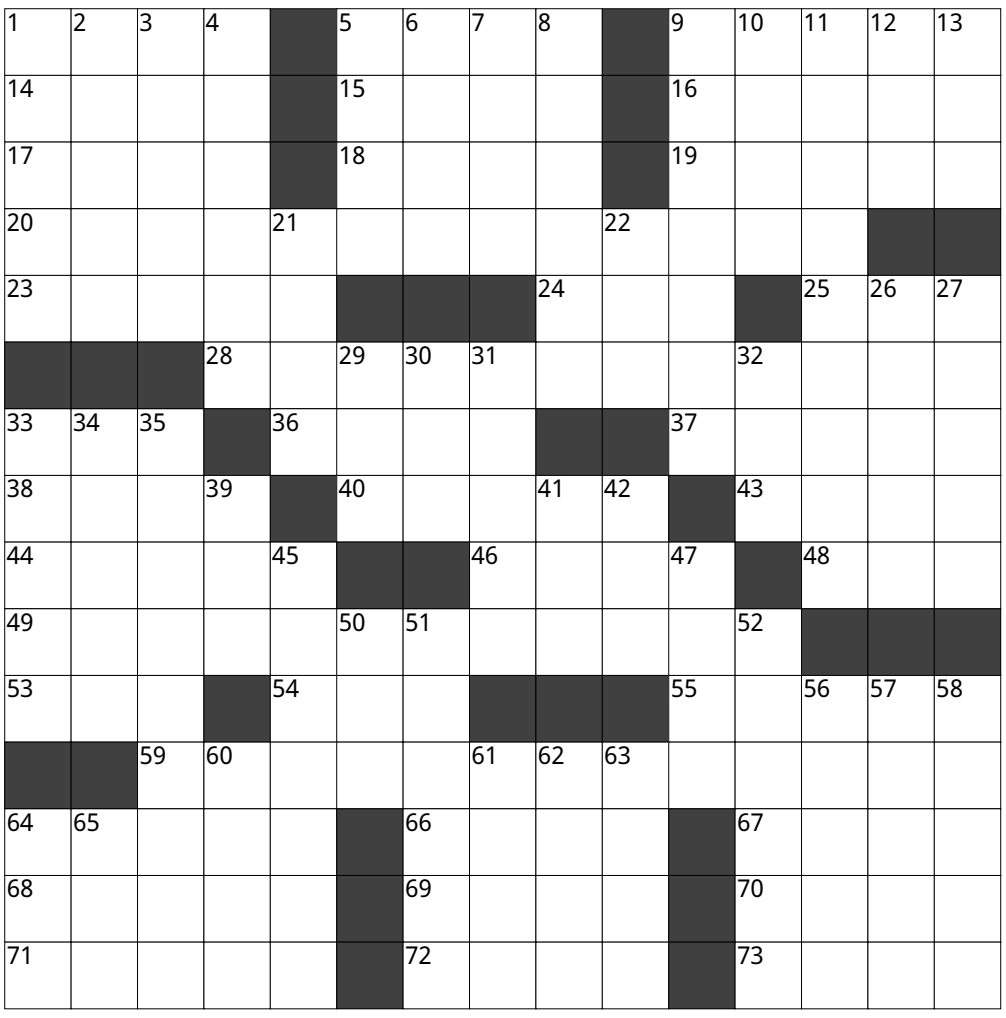
"We saw [Sean Dorsey] in Maine. We were so moved by it, we said, okay, we're going to Middlebury!" she said. "I am going to see it tomorrow night too, and I have more friends coming from Maine to watch."

The show was evocative of self-love, joy and imagination — all themes we could use a bit more of in our lives.

Sean Dorsey Dance performing their new program, "THE LOST ART OF DREAMING". COURTESY PHOTO / PERFORMING ARTS SERIES

National Word Play

Josh Harkins



ACROSS
1 Owner of both NASCAR and F1 teams Gene
5 Bad score in a hoops game?
9 "Las Vegas of the East"
14 Set in stone
15 Hasn't lost yet
16 Magazine founded by John H. Johnson.
17 "Is it just ___ ..."
18 Junior linebacker?
19 Opening of a decision-making process?
20 Criterion in Karachi?
23 Carbon and iron
24 Gross thing to say
25 Newer Star Wars pilot Dameron
28 Performer in Pristina?
33 Non-lethal ammo
36 When doubled, an island near Tahiti
37 It's minecraft recipe is a stick and charcoal
38 Courses taken to broader your academic experience, abbr.
40 Long time capital of the Mughal Empire
43 Tiny amount of coffee
44 Typical
46 Google or instagram, for example
48 Sign of good ticket sales, abbr.
49 Travelers in Taipei?
53 Degree for Dr. Shaq
54 Coat for 9-down
55 Chinese Communist leader Zhou
59 Crazy Cleaners in Conakry?
64 Button on many a video game controller
66 See through (vision)
67 Fictional cop Foley
68 Shoot for, as a goal
69 Prob. solver
70 Former Spurs footballer Alli
71 Comedy partner of Key
72 Evade a tail, say
73 Mujeres, ex.

DOWN
1 Natural ropes
2 Got to
3 Part of a legendary diner order in The Blues Brothers
4 Trigger of many a murder mystery
5 Major for many a future atty.
6 Fit for service
7 "The Last Jedi" director Johnson
8 Small apartment
9 Carnivorous mammal whose name derives from Dutch for "monkey"
10 Nadir of "Community"
11 Plots
12 "Give me ___!", beginning of many an encouraging chant in Urbana-Champaign, perhaps?
13 Spanish exclamation
21 Pig
22 Athletic conf. which has lost its meaning and perhaps its way with new members SMU, Stanford, and Cal?!?
26 A grouchy kind of guy?
27 Lead in to -linguistics or -graphy
29 Grass
30 Lode makeup
31 Trumpet part
32 First-step of an alley-oop, say
33 Rapscallion
34 Feel down
35 Most watched show in Netflix history
39 What children do after they see
41 Singer-songwriter with 2021 Academy Award for Best Original Song
42 Anger
45 Privateer Jean of Battle of New Orleans fame
47 ___ Rabbit
50 Sister
51 Fudge's middle name in "Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing"
52 Golfers J.C. and Sam, for two
56 More chill
57 "Jungle Book" wolf
58 Four-time consecutive Stanley Cup winners, for short
60 Mount between the Volga and the Ob
61 Florence's river
62 Clothes annoyance
63 Failed Festival created by Billy McFarland
64 Drain
65 Rare occurrence these days in American sports

WINTER SPORTS PREVIEWS

By JACK McGUIRE, TING CUI & JONATHAN BUCHHOLZ
Senior Sports Editor & Sports Editors

Women's Basketball

Head Coach: KJ Krasco
Athletes to watch: Alexa Mustafaj '25, Augusta Dixon '25, Calie Messina '26

The women's basketball team looks to build on their strong 17–9 season last year and qualify for the NCAA tournament. Last season, the team played well, and made it all the way to the NESCAC semifinals, but a 64–51 loss to Bowdoin College ended their season prematurely. This year the women's basketball team is already off to a great 5–1 start and looks poised to equal or better last season's success. Mustfaj is set to lead the Panthers in her final season with the program. In her three years on the team, she has become the programs all time leading scorer, earned All-NESCAC honors three times and has averaged 21.8 points per game. Outside of Mustafaj, the team has a strong supporting cast, helping them contend for a NESCAC title. Dixon was on the NESCAC all second team last season and averaged 11.6 rebounds per game. Messina was a crucial contributor last season, leading the team in assists and steals.

Key Competitions: Trinity College (Home–Jan. 10), Bowdoin (Away–Feb. 7), Amherst College (Home–Feb. 14).

Men's Basketball

Head Coach: Jeff Brown
Athletes to watch: Sam Stevens '25, David Brennan '25, Tristan Joseph '26.

The men's basketball team is looking to bounce back after an 11–14 campaign last year where they faced an early exit in the NESCAC tournament. Two seasons ago, the team was 20–6 and won a game in the NCAA tournament. The team will look to recreate their success from that season this year. Stevens should be leading the charge offensively for the Panthers. In his rookie season at Middlebury, Stevens averaged 18 points per game, but he failed to equal that mark in his sophomore and junior seasons. In five games this year, Stevens has exceeded his rookie scoring totals, averaging 20 points per game so far. He is supported by a number of players including Brennan, who averaged 10.3 rebounds per game last season, and Evan Flaks '24 who shared the team lead in assists with 68.

Key Competitions: Tufts University (Home–Jan. 18), Williams College (Away–Jan. 25), Colby College (Home–Feb. 8).

Alpine Skiing

Head Coach: Steve Bartlett
Athletes to Watch: Kjersti Moritz '28, Bradshaw Underhill '25, Mika-Anne Reha '25

After finishing in third place out of the 14 competitors at last year's EISA Championships, the Middlebury Alpine ski team is in a good position to have another good season and win carnivals. Two of the team's standout performers from last season will be returning this year. Underhill, the runner-up for the giant slalom at the EISA Championships last year will lead the way for the men, and Reha, who came in sixth place in the slalom at the NCAA Championships last year, will lead the way for the women. Moritz is also a promising rookie that will add to the team's roster of talented skiers. In addition to skiing at Middlebury, Moritz was recently named to the Stifel U.S. Alpine Ski Team. Moritz was named to the U.S. development team which is at the top of the junior developmental pipeline.

Key Competitions: Bates Carnival (Newry, ME–Jan. 10–11), Middlebury Carnival (Snowbowl–Feb. 14–15), EISA Championship (Franconia, NH–Feb. 21–22).

Nordic Skiing

Head Coach: Andrew Johnson
Athletes to Watch: Jack Christner '25, Logan Moore '25, Shea Brams '26

Middlebury's nordic skiing team is looking to build on their strong season from last year. Last season, a number of skiers had strong performances in the NCAA championship. In the women's 20 kilometer mass start portion of the NCAA Championships, Brams came in 22nd place and Maggie Wagner '26 came in 37th place. For the men's portion of the event, Moore came in 13th place and Christner came in 35th place. With another year of experience under their belt, all of these returning athletes are set to continue to make Middlebury Nordic team a formidable squad.

Key Competitions: Bates Carnival (Newry, ME–Jan. 10–11), Middlebury Carnival (Snowbowl–Feb. 14–15), EISA Championship (Franconia, NH–Feb. 21–22).

Women's Hockey

Head Coach: Bill Mandigo
Captains: Cat Appleyard '24.5, Sophia Merageas '24.5
Athletes to Watch: Kate Flynn '27, Olivia McManus '27, Sophia Will '26

The Middlebury Women's Hockey team looks to build on last season's success, which saw them finish 18–7–4 and capture the NESCAC championship. Their season ended in the NCAA tournament semifinals with a loss against Elmira College (0–1). Under the guidance of Mandigo, the winningest ice hockey coach across all NCAA divisions, the Panthers remain a perennial powerhouse in the NESCAC. This year, they aim to defend their league title and compete for a fifth NCAA championship. Rising talents like Flynn and McManus are poised to step into larger roles, while goalie Will returns as a crucial defensive component after a record-setting sophomore campaign. The Panthers have started the season undefeated with 7 straight wins, including a 4–0 shutout against Plattsburgh State this past weekend, showcasing their championship potential.

Key Games: Utica College (Home – Dec. 4), Amherst (Home – Jan. 17-18).

COURTESY PHOTO / WILL COSTELLO
Kale Tornwini '25 drives to the basket.

COURTESY PHOTO / WILL COSTELLO
The men's hockey team poses after a win.

Men's Hockey

Head Coach: Jack Ceglarski
Captains: Jin Lee '25, Jake Oblak '25
Athletes to Watch: Lee, John Burdett '26, Andrew Heinze '27, Jack Silverman '28

Ceglarski begins his first season as head coach of Middlebury men's hockey after a successful tenure as interim coach last year. Under his guidance last season, the Panthers reached the NESCAC Semifinals for the first time since 2016 and achieved their highest win total since the 2019–20 season, though their run ended with a loss to Trinity. This year, the team aims to build on that progress and compete for the conference crown. The Panthers have started the current season with strong momentum, posting a 4–2 record, highlighted by a decisive 2–0 victory over Norwich to claim the 26th Annual Layer Eight Shootout title. The Panthers' roster combines veteran leadership and emerging talent, with captain Lee providing dynamic playmaking alongside first-year forward Silverman. On the defensive end, Burdett commands the blue line, and goaltender Heinze has emerged as a key figure with standout performances early in the season.

Key Games: Hamilton College (Away – Dec. 7), Trinity (Home – Jan. 10), Tufts (Home – Jan 31), Williams (Home – Feb. 15).

Women's Squash

Head Coach: Mark Lewis
Captain: Abby Holding '25
Athletes to Watch: Lucy Ronda '28, Caroline Didden '28, Aanvi Anand '28, Mariana Reedich '27

The Middlebury women's squash program enters the 2024-25 season looking to build upon last year's impressive 14–5 campaign, which saw the team advance to the semifinals of the Kurtz Cup and secure a 15th-place national ranking. The Panthers have opened their current season with a commanding 9–0 sweep against Connecticut College in their Nov. 16 opener. While the team faced a setback against #2 Trinity, they quickly rebounded with a victory over William Smith College on November 23, establishing a solid 2–1 record. The Panthers feature a promising mix of veteran leadership and emerging talent, with Holding at the helm and a strong contingent of first-year players, including Ronda, Didden and Anand making immediate contributions to the lineup. Reedich is another player to watch after a solid rookie campaign last season, posting the second-most wins on the team at 17. The team looks to maintain their momentum as they prepare to host Vassar in their home tournament this weekend.

Key Competitions: Williams (Away – Jan. 22), Amherst (Home – Feb. 1).

Men's Squash

Head Coach: Mark Lewis
Captains: Alexis Ballo '25, Nathan Feinstein '25
Athletes to Watch: Kian Kardestuncer '26, Charlie Clifford '27, Gabe Feinstein '28

The Middlebury men's squash team has opened their 2024-25 campaign with a 2–1 record, securing victories against Connecticut College (7–2) and Hobart College (8–1) while falling to fourth-ranked Trinity (2–7). The program returns a strong core of experienced players while integrating five promising first-year additions to deepen their roster. Senior leadership and experienced juniors, like Kardestuncer, are fostering an environment centered on continuous improvement. First year Feinstein who has played in all three tournaments so far this season is a player to watch this season (2–1), along with sophomore Clifford. The team's collective drive for excellence positions them well for the challenges ahead in a competitive season.

Key Competitions: Colby (Away – Jan. 19), Amherst (Home – Feb. 1), MIT (Home – Feb. 21)

Women's Track and Field

Head Coach: Martin Beatty
Athletes to Watch: Audrey MacLean '27, Macy Daggitt '25, Zoe Wang '25

Fresh off their third straight NESCAC title last April, the Middlebury women's track and field team looks to build on last season's success. The team also found success in the greater New England area, placing sixth of 27 at the Division III Indoor New England Championships and second of 36 at the Division III Outdoor New England Championships. At the national level, Middlebury's 4x400-meter relay competed at the NCAA Championships in the winter and in the spring, long jumper Daggitt earned All-American honors and MacLean placed sixth nationally in the 3,000-meter steeplechase, claiming All-American honors as well. Wang broke her own pole vault record last winter and looks to improve on her stellar performance.

Key Competitions: Middlebury Winter Invitational (Home – Jan. 17–18), Division III Indoor New England Championships (Away – Feb. 28–Mar. 1), Open New England Indoor Championships (Away – Mar. 7–8).

Men's Track and Field

Head Coach: Martin Beatty
Athletes to Watch: Caleb Smith '27, Marco Motroni '25, Dave Filias '25

The Middlebury Men's Track and Field team will look to improve on last year's performance. The Panthers placed fifth at the NESCAC Championship and tied for ninth at the Division III Indoor New England Championships, where Smith and Motroni both broke school records. At the NESCAC Championship, Filias placed first for the second time, and will look to defend his title. He and Smith both competed at the NCAA championships last year and will hope to requalify again. With their 200m indoor track at Virtue Field House, the team will host four events this season and travel to several others.

Key Competitions: Middlebury Winter Invitational (Home – Jan. 17–18), Division III Indoor New England Championships (Away – Feb. 28–Mar. 1), Open New England Indoor Championships (Away – Mar. 7–8).

Women's Swimming and Diving

Head Coach: Bob Rueppel and Bradley Schott
Athletes to Watch: Chloe Katz '25, Pai Easterbrook '26, Anna McGrew '28

Last year, the women's swimming and diving team went 5–2 and placed third at the NESCAC Championship. Last year, Katz placed ninth at the NCAA championships and earned All-American honors. The team's season has already started, having already beaten Connecticut College's camels in a stunning 196–92 victory (their fourth straight win against the program). Easterbrook contributed to the victory, placing first in the 1-meter and 3-meter diving events. The team fell short to Amherst 113–187, who is nationally ranked at #22. Against Amherst, McGrew stood out for winning the 200-yard medley relay, 50 freestyle, and 100 free.

Key Competitions: Bomber Invitational (Away – Dec. 6–8), Middlebury Invitational (Home – Jan. 31–Feb. 1), NESCAC Championship (Away – Feb. 13–16).

Men's Swimming and Diving

Head Coach: Bob Rueppel and Bradley Schott
Athletes to Watch: Sam Hughes '25, Owen White '26

After going 3–4 last season, the Middlebury men's swimming and diving team is off to a 0–2 start early this season. Last year, the team placed seventh at the NESCAC championship and were victorious in head-to-head meets against Bowdoin, Union and Hamilton. Schott, the team's diving coach, was named NESCAC Diving Co-Coach of the Year, likely because Middlebury divers placed fourth, fifth and seventh at the NESCAC Championship. Hughes was named All-NESCAC, finishing second in the 200 backstroke and has already begun to find success this season. Finishing seventh at the NESCAC Championship last year, White has been strong in the 1-meter diving event.

Key Competitions: Bomber Invitational (Away – Dec. 6–8), Middlebury Invitational (Home – Jan. 31–Feb. 1), NESCAC Championship (Away – Feb. 20–23).

The Side Hustle: Middlebury on ice

By MAX MYERS & MADELEINE KAPTEIN
Contributing Writer & Managing Editor

Welcome to The Side Hustle. Inspired by ESPN8: The Ocho — ESPN's annual segment where the sports network highlights more obscure sports — this column highlights the sports that The Campus typically reports on less frequently... until now.

The Middlebury figure skating team just keeps on gliding — backwards, in complex spins, but most importantly, forwards. The team has recently increased their activity in the intercollegiate figure skating circuit since competing in the Northeast Conference for the first time in several years in the spring of 2022.

On Nov. 8–10, their six competitive members travelled to Monsey, N.Y. for the 2024 Violet Ice Classic hosted by NYU and took 15th place among 30 much larger teams, such as Boston University, Cornell University and Sacred Heart University, despite being a small group and lacking a coach.

The team attributes their success to their tight-knit group of six competitive skaters, who range from beginners to experienced skaters to club co-president and Team U.S.A. figure skater Ting Cui '25.5. Cui took first place in the Northeast Conference in November and will compete in the 2025 Prevagen U.S. Figure Skating Championships in Wichita, Kan. in January.

Cui and Maya Henning '25 restarted the competition team, which had been dormant for the 10 years before spring 2022. The team has the opportunity to attend three competitions each academic year — one in the fall and two in the spring. Making it to all three is ideal, but the team typically attends one or two a year, according to Cui.

"I think it means a lot that we can have such a wide range in level and still have a tightly bonded team with great chemistry," Cui said. "We're very welcoming."

At every competition they attend, each member skates their own individual program, which fall into event categories of levels from beginning to senior. Cui choreographs and coordinates these programs to ensure they adhere to the competition's rules. They also take part in a team event, a feature unique to collegiate competitions.

Team events require a minimum of three participants, all of whom skate solo, but must collectively perform a total of seven "elements," or specific figure-skating moves. The judges then score the technique and skill of each of these seven elements individually, and these scores are totaled to determine the winning team. According to Cui, strategizing based on which team member can perform each element with the most skill is especially important for this event.

Every member of the team practices individually multiple times a week on the ice at Kenyon Arena and aim for weekly group practices in the weeks leading up to a competition.

The club offers skaters like Kate McDonald '27.5 the opportunity to continue with a sport she's been participating in since childhood.

"I started to figure skate when I was probably around eight or nine, and I've been competing ever since. It's really great that Middlebury has a community and opportunity to do that," McDonald said.

Team member Esteban Molina '27 grew up speed skating in Colombia, but turned to figure skating when someone at his local rink recommended it to him. He began practicing and fell in love with the sport.

Henning remarked on Molina's impressive skating abilities.

"He's totally self-taught. He didn't have a coach yet he is still doing all of these doubles," Henning said. Double jumps are a move in which a skater jumps up and performs two rotations in the air.

After moving to the U.S in 2020, Molina had to sell candy to pay for his equipment after being kicked out of the rink in Houston where he was living.

"The Houston Chronicle published an article about me... and then some people donated for figure skating," he said.

At Middlebury, he is fortunately able to skate for free, an aspect of the club which Henning said was an important part of making figure skating at Middlebury more accessible.

"It's not super accessible to skate, especially because you have to pay for coaches," Henning said. "It's not something where you can just step on the ice and go like in other sports."

However, at Middlebury, students can do exactly that. This J-Term, Cui and club Co-President Lizzy Sherman '26 will teach a J-Term figure skating workshop. At no cost, students will be able to learn the basics of skating and have a chance to perform in the team's annual Winter Carnival Ice Show on Feb. 15 and 16 — two shows on each day — and will surround the theme "All You Need is Love."

Each of the six team members will perform individually at the show and skate together in a group number. In 2023, they skated to "I Want It That Way" by the Backstreet Boys and were met with ample enthusiasm from the audience, according to Cui. Guest skaters from University of Vermont (UVM), additional Middlebury student skaters not on the team and many skaters from the local Middlebury Figure Skating Club in town, who help organize the event, will also participate.

Sherman enjoys the ice show because it gives the skaters a lot more creative freedom than competition skating. It also involved many community members from the town of Middlebury's figure skating club which makes for a display of unity between the school and town.

"[It's] my first time being in an environment where we're all training but there's no animosity, there's no competition, it's just fun," Sherman said.

The team also hosts open skates throughout the year on Sundays from 1-3 p.m., where anyone can join and be coached by the team, regardless of their skill level. Skates at these events and for the workshop are provided by the team.

"There's also a place for everyone in terms of preferred skill set — creatives can do the show, more technical skaters can compete, and skaters with passion but who might not be interested in either can help with the J-Term workshop or recreationally come to open skates if they are beginners," Cui wrote.

Editor's Note: Ting Cui '25.5 is a Sports Editor for The Campus. She had no role in editing this article.

COURTESY PHOTO / LIZZY SHERMAN

The figure skating team during their 2023 performance at the Winter Carnival Ice Show to "I Want It That Way" by the Backstreet Boys.

I FELT THE SLUDGE: CHAT PILE AT HIGHER GROUND

By JUNE SU
Senior Multimedia Editor

On Nov. 14, noise rock band Chat Pile brought the live sound of their new LP, "Cool World" to Higher Ground in Burlington. The band's nihilistic lyrics, downtempo cuts, and punk influences have also led to widespread characterizations of their music as sludge metal. Released on Oct. 11, the band's second LP displays a continuing, intense focus on the present political moment: chock full of horrors with severities reaching the surreal.

The veteran performers played a request-only set, a strategy which must help keep their gig fresh during a tour of playing shows nearly every other day for three weeks. The crowd howls out song titles as the four men on stage survey eager fans vying for their attention — I am barking like a dog the title of my favorite Chat Pile track from "Cool World": "Frownland."

Jack Mitchell, a 27 year old wastewater engineer I met in the pit, remarked in an interview with The Campus on this performance style. This "democratic" process was fitting considering the ethos of the band.

At the concert I am in a prime position to cast my vote in this democracy: the middle of the narrow but open Showcase Lounge, Higher Ground's 300 person capacity indoor venue. An unchanging red light casts the quartet in menacing crimson tones, which is sharply contrasted by their playful smiles and brotherly comradery.

Stin, the bassist, with his salt and pepper curls and permanently good-natured expression, leans towards Raygun Busch, the vocalist, and mutters. With his rounded shoulders and unconcerned gaze, Busch agrees that they'll play my request next. He assertively shushes the drunk dad, who is almost toppling onto the stage while nagging for them to play "Three Little Pigs" (by Green Jelly) like he's disciplining a devious child. Busch points towards me.

The people quiet. I make my request and dramatically drag my fingers down the corners of my mouth to make a frown.

Stin and his brother Cap'n Ron, the tall, gaunt drummer nod and begin the pounding rhythm. Twenty seconds in, Luther Manhole slams out the dreadful yet addicting guitar melody of Frownland. This fantastic sludge climbs for a couple bars and drops as Busch declares his desolation, marching his voice to the industrial beat,

Shadow on the wall like I was never there
Pull the mask down, pull the mask down
And escape into the dark, and escape into the dark
And escape into the dark, and escape into the dark

Alienation is a familiar theme in Chat Pile's discography. Hailing from Oklahoma City, the band's name refers to the piles of "chat" or byproducts of lead-zinc mining which are commonplace across Oklahoma. This anthropogenic pollution can be found in different forms throughout their discography, spanning from rageful confrontations to defeated monologues by Busch atop thunderous sludge-filled performances from the rest of the band.

The quartet performs new classics at Higher Ground from the "Cool World" such as the opening track, "I Am Dog Now." The audience is led into the song with a heavy bassline and Luther Manhole's relentless punching of one dissonant chord. Raygun Busch in his backwards cap staggers back and forth on the stage in a dejected yet threatening posture. Mitchell perfectly characterizes Raygun Busch's performance: an effortless combination of theatrics and simplicity.

"He kind of takes on this very possessed puppety kind of persona, but he's very much just a guy being a guy on stage," Mitchell said.

Oscar de Swaan Arons '27 expanded on this persona in an interview with the Campus.

"The main singer didn't have shoes on, he didn't have a shirt on, and he was talking to the crowd as though we were just all in the room as friends. And he seemed very into the lyrics of the song - he was very much feeling the emotions that he was singing. As somebody who hadn't heard the music before, it made me relate to it more or understand it more, " he said.

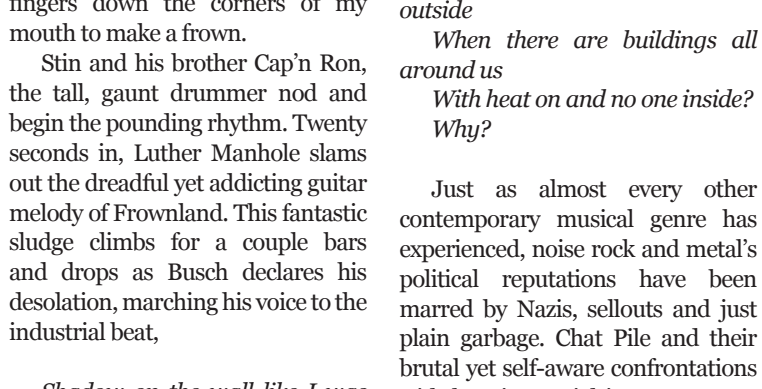
Busch grasps the microphone in his left hand, occasionally draping his shoulders down over his hip from the emotional weight of his vocal execution. The lyrics are simple, with the title, "I Am Dog Now," consistently repeated among lines describing a squalor and sense of imprisonment. The delivery is an impassioned roar with a snarling enunciation of the poetry.

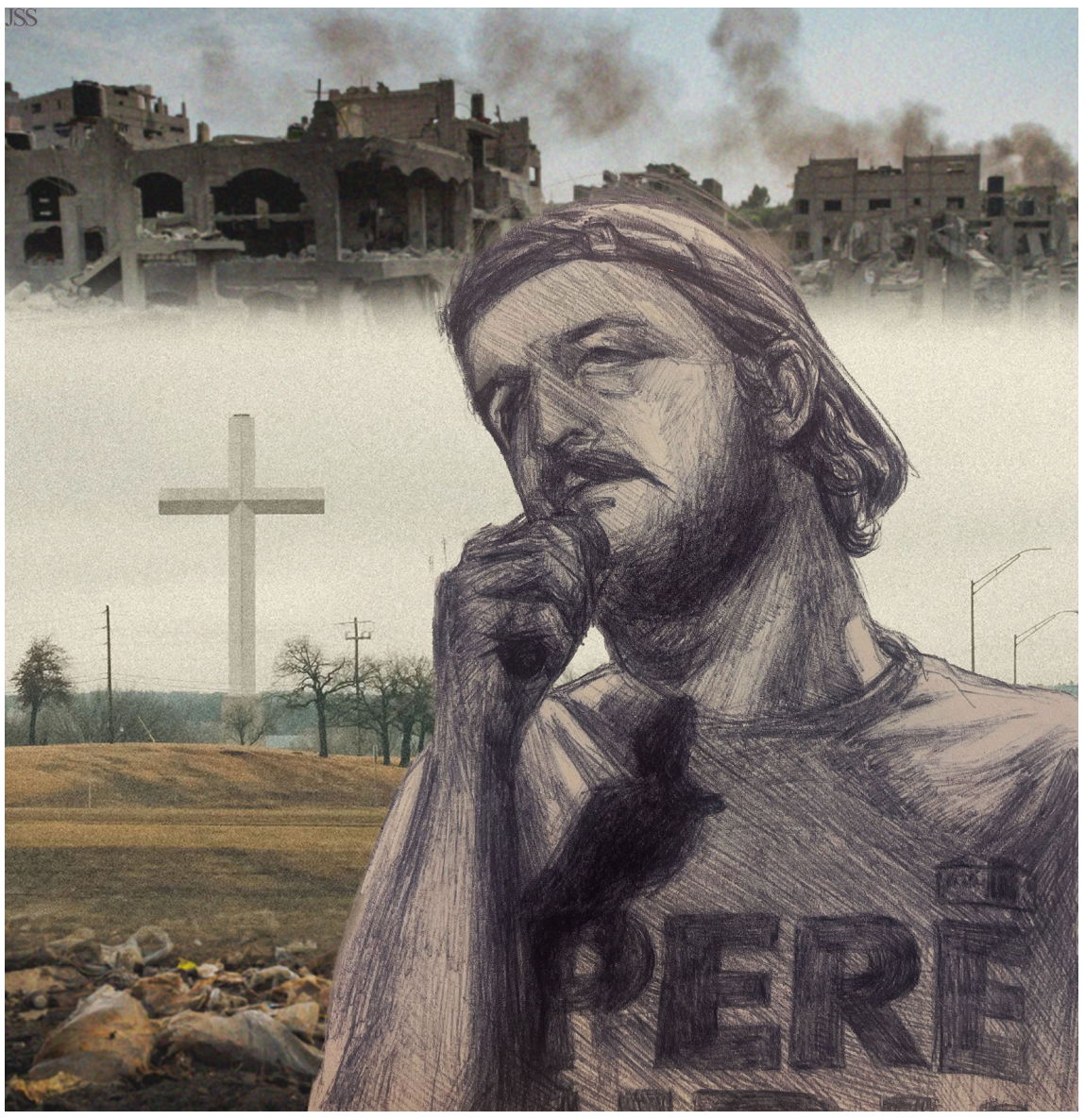
Within the context of their body of work, "I Am Dog Now" likely represents the exasperation of the average laborer, citizen and person toiling away each day under worsening economic and political conditions. To the crowd's delight, the band agrees to play "Why" from their previous LP, "God's Country": a song which questions a world order in which devastating social issues are left unaddressed even in the most "developed" states.

Why do people have to live outside
When there are buildings all around us
With heat on and no one inside?
Why?

Just as almost every other contemporary musical genre has experienced, noise rock and metal's political reputations have been marred by Nazis, sellouts and just plain garbage. Chat Pile and their brutal yet self-aware confrontations with burning social issues portrays the modern political experience with remarkable lucidity. The rhetoric of Chat Pile runs as clear and black as the revolutionary purity of heavy metal titans, Black Sabbath. This is especially evident in Chat Pile's courage in discussing the horrors witnessed in Palestine.

"Shame" comes towards the end of the show and is another personal standout from "Cool World." In an interview with Crack Magazine, Raygun Bosch remarked "At the time I wrote ["Shame"], I'm seeing the guy get run over by a f—king tank." Similar to the band's approach in "Why," violence is discussed in "Shame" with a similar tone of disillusionment towards liberal institutions.


Chat Pile's simple setup at Higher Ground.



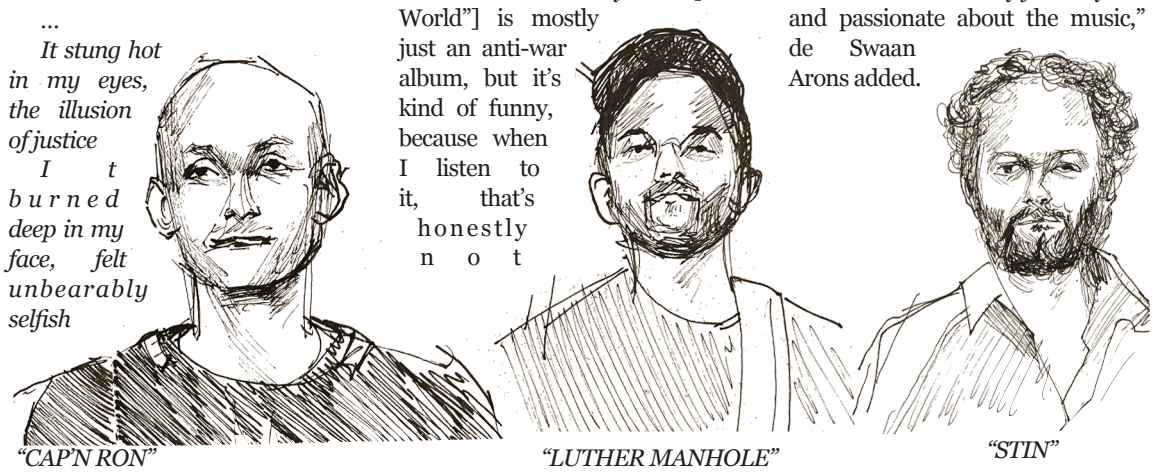
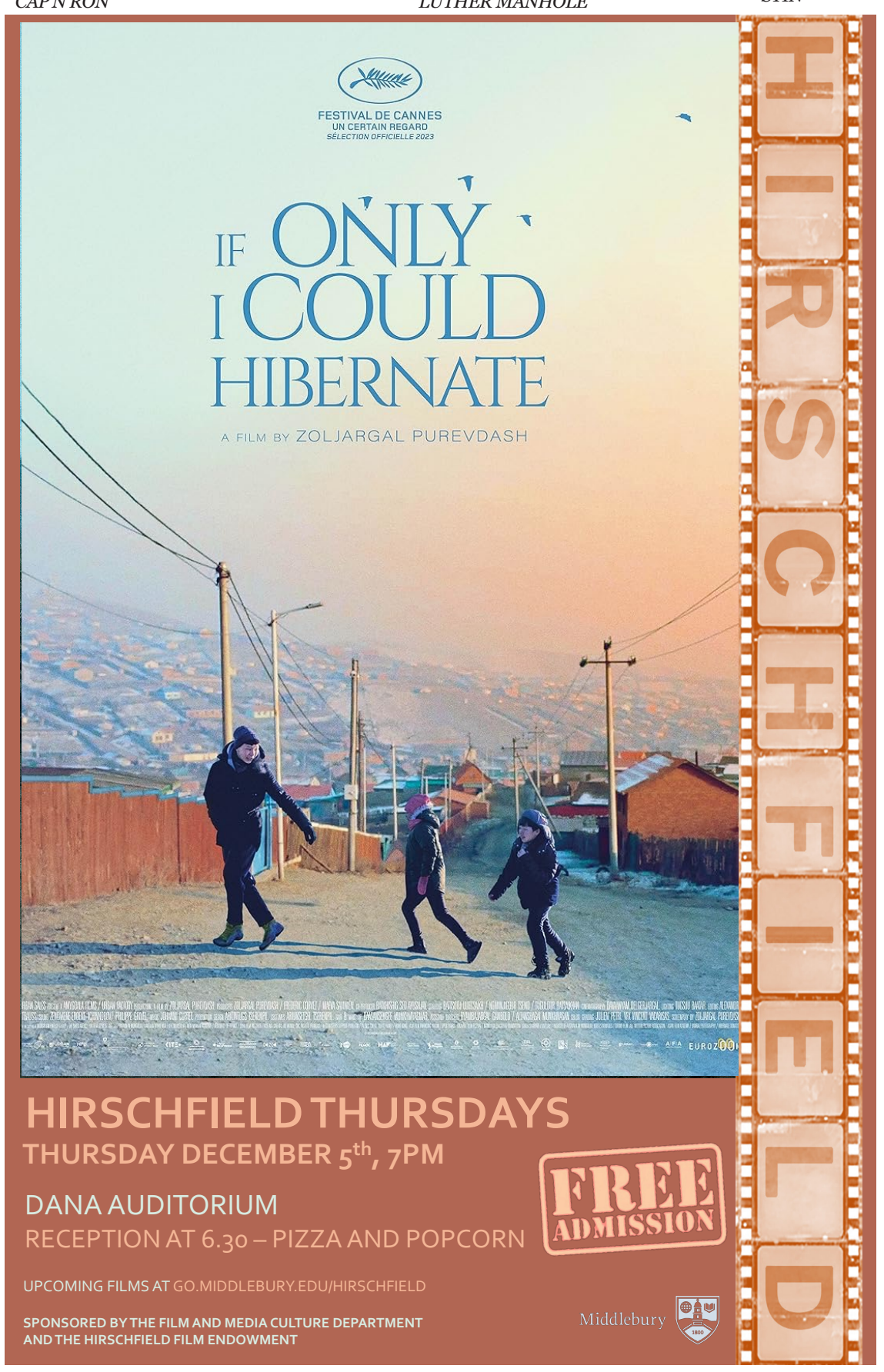
PHOTOS AND VISUALS BY JUNE SU / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
Illustration of "Raygun Busch" with "Cool World" album cover collage.

In their parents arms, the kids were falling apart
Broken tiny bodies holding tiny still hearts
...
It stung hot in my eyes, the illusion of justice
It burned deep in my face, felt unbearably selfish

Ultimately, Chat Pile cannot be categorized with any one element of their sound. While my greatest impression of the band comes from their political messaging, others like Mitchell gravitate towards the band for different reasons.

"I think that they said ["Cool World"] is mostly just an anti-war album, but it's kind of funny, because when I listen to it, that's honestly not exactly what I hear. I hear it as a more personal album," Mitchell said.

"It was rambunctious, but also personal. I felt very close to the artist... While these songs are very dark and emotional, the performers themselves are actually just very fun and passionate about the music," de Swaan Arons added.


"CAP'N RON" "LUTHER MANHOLE" "STIN"